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# Doctrine of Baptism

REV. W. HAY M. H. AITKEN, M.A.

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# The Doctrine of Baptism

## MECHANICAL OR SPIRITUAL

BY

W. HAY M. H. AITKEN, M.A.

AUTHOR OF "THE MECHANICAL VERSUS THE SPIRITUAL," "THE ROMANCE OF CHRISTIAN WORK AND EXPERIENCE," "THE SCHOOL OF GRACE," ETC.

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# PREFACE

BAPTISMAL regeneration is not the question of the hour; it is rather around the other sacrament that, for the time being, discussion is most active. Yet, since Holy Baptism is the initiatory rite of our faith, the doctrine of Baptism must needs have to do with what is fundamental in the Christian system, whatever our theory of that system may be.

Fifty years ago, in the early days of the Oxford movement, baptismal regeneration was a "burning question"; and it was duly threshed out in our ecclesiastical law courts, with results distinctly unfavourable to the Tractarian interpretation of our formularies. As, however, in this instance, the party of innovation was the aggressor, the adverse decision did not shake the position of its members in our Church; it only rendered it possible for those that took a different view of the Church's teaching still to find a place within her pale.

The partial defeat carried with it the presage of a larger success; for it gave prominence and notoriety to a dogma which had much to commend it to those Churchmen who disliked the Evangelical Revival, chiefly because of its insistence on the necessity of definite and conscious "conversion." To High Churchmen, who were also *dry*, the doctrine was attractive, because it seemed the justification of their dryness; while more earnest men of that school regarded it as a safeguard against the extreme sub-

jectivity of Evangelical teaching. Many sober Churchmen, in other respects suspicious of the Oxford movement, accepted the dogma out of supposed loyalty to the Prayer-book; while not a few unspiritual men rejoiced in it, as a means of escaping the claims of spirituality. So it has come to pass that, of all the tenets of the Mediæval school, this doctrine of necessary regeneration, by the act of Baptism, *ex opere operato*, is the most generally accepted.

Yet to accept this, in the unqualified form in which it is presented to us by teachers of this party, is to accept the principle on which the whole Mediæval system rests; while its abandonment is the surrender of that system. For, in the first place, it is here that we meet with the most glaring substitution of the mechanical for the spiritual. And in the second place, that theory of the Church which is absolutely essential to this system, cannot be maintained, if this dogma be, even so much as modified, not to say, abandoned.

My endeavour, in this little volume, has been to examine carefully and impartially the revelation that has been made on this all-important subject. In doing so I shall have to point out wherein it differs both from the teaching of the Oxford school, and from certain inexact views on the subject, which sometimes prevail amongst those who have no sympathy with that movement.

All that I ask of my readers is a painstaking and unprejudiced consideration of my argument; let it be tested by an appeal to revelation, enforced with rigorous logic, and by this let my conclusions stand or fall.

W. HAY M. H. AITKEN.

Lansdowne Road, Bedford.

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БИБЛІОТЕКА
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# The Doctrine of Baptism

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTORY

### § 1. The Circumstances which have led to the Writing of this Book

In an interesting and instructive discussion, which occupied the columns of one of our leading Church newspapers during the greater part of last year, I ventured to throw down the challenge, that it was demonstrable that the Sacerdotal system necessarily involves what deserves to be called a mechanical theory of the Christian religion. I pointed out that this system is really based upon the assumption that God has been pleased to attach supernatural results to mechanical, or quasi-mechanical, conditions. In order to accept it, we have to believe that God has bound Himself to concede a personal intervention of His grace and power in response to the recital of a formula, or the performance of a manual act; even although there may be neither faith nor devotion on the part of either the administrants or the recipients of certain divinely appointed ordinances.

In the comments which my earlier letters (subsequently published in pamphlet form [1]) elicited, it was pointed out by some, who disputed my statement, that Sacerdotalists, quite as much as Evangelicals, hold that the recipients can derive no spiritual benefit from participating in Holy Communion, unless they approach the ordinance with a right disposition, and with a true faith.

This point I was only too glad to be able to concede, and called the attention of my critics to the fact that I had carefully abstained from affirming that this was not so. Neither in my letters nor in my pamphlet had I charged Sacerdotalists with holding that the mere mechanical act of reception, whatever our frame of mind, could induce the spiritual results that should follow from participation.

What I had affirmed was that their theory of the Real Presence compels them to believe that what may be a merely mechanical, or quasi-mechanical act, then and there, supernaturally deposits the body and blood of Christ upon the altar in the elements, under the form of bread and wine. I further argued that the *moral tendency* of such a belief must be to induce, especially on the part of the ignorant and unspiritual, the conviction that the mere reception is the all-important thing, and that some sort of benefit must follow so long as this takes place. Surely, such will feel, the body and blood of

[1] "The Mechanical *versus* the Spiritual. Two Contrasted Conceptions of the Christian Religion." John F. Shaw & Co., 48 Paternoster Row.

Christ cannot be received without its doing the recipient some sort of good, unless, indeed, at the very time he knows himself to be guilty of some particularly heinous sin; nor is it at all unlikely that they will fall into the error of supposing the mere holding of this opinion, that the elements are changed in consecration into the body and blood of Christ, to be all the faith God requires.

## § 2. Inconsistency of the Teaching of Sacerdotalists with respect to the Two Sacraments

Having thus briefly indicated my conclusions with respect to the sacerdotal theory of the Eucharist, it is not necessary to pursue this subject further, as it is with the other sacrament that I have now to do. To me it seems that the Sacerdotalists are not consistent in their teaching with respect to the two sacraments. They are ready to admit that no spiritual benefit can be obtained in the Eucharist unless there be a proper disposition of soul, and a real and living faith; and yet they equally insist that the inestimable blessing of spiritual regeneration is received by every baptized child, as the result of the act of Baptism; and that, not provisionally, as a special concession to, and arrangement to meet, the helplessness and incapacity of infancy, but absolutely, involving nothing less than the imparting of a new life to the recipient, as his permanent possession, capable of being forfeited indeed, but only by wilful and mortal sin.

It is held that this great spiritual change may be brought about by the mere recital of certain words, and the performance of a certain formal act, without the slightest approach to faith on the part of any person concerned in the transaction. An unspiritual, or even sceptical priest may gabble through the service in the presence of parents and godparents who are just as indifferent as himself, yet in response to the utterance of the appointed words, and the performance of the sacramental rite, then and there the Holy Spirit will perform this spiritual miracle, and the unconscious recipient of the sacrament will be born again, "not of blood, nor of the will of man, but of God."

### § 3. Their Contention that neither are the Words of our Service Hypothetical, nor the Benefit Provisional

It is emphatically denied that there is anything hypothetical in the words which our Church employs in the baptismal service for infants, although the same declaration is made in the Service for the Baptism of adults, in whose case, one would have supposed, a hypothetical explanation of the words would have been a matter of necessity. Nor again is it admitted that the benefit witnessed to by the ordinance is only imparted provisionally; and that therefore its permanent retention must depend upon the fulfilment, on our side, of the divinely ordained conditions.

It is asserted in the most unequivocal and dogmatic terms that all alike over whom the words have been pronounced, and the water poured, *are*, and remain, regenerate; and therefore can never be regenerated again, whether they do, or do not, exhibit "faith in the operation of God."

It is wrong, therefore, we are taught, to preach to such as these, "Ye must be born again." There may not be, there may never have been, the slightest sign of this new birth exhibited in their lives, or realised in their experience; there may never have been anything in their conduct or character to differentiate them, even in the smallest degree, from their unbaptized neighbours; none of the consequences that Holy Scripture describes as flowing from the new birth may ever have ensued in their case, yet if the words have been spoken, and the sacramental act performed, the Catholic religion binds us, so it is alleged, to believe that these persons have been born of God.

### § 4. The same Conclusion Entertained, but not usually Expressed, with respect to Adults

Nor is this mechanical theory with respect to this ordinance restricted to the case of infants; it is equally maintained, though in a somewhat modified form, at any rate by many who belong to this school, in the case of the administration of this sacrament to adults. It is true that one meets with a great deal of evasion here, and no wonder; for it is pre-

cisely at this point that the mechanical theory is exposed to its severest strain. I have found it difficult to get a definite answer from teachers and writers of this school as to whether an adult, receiving Baptism without any proper disposition of heart, or even seriousness of purpose, is, or is not, regenerate. It was very interesting and instructive to notice, in the discussion that I have referred to, how this plain issue was avoided. None seemed to like to assert that an unworthy recipient of Baptism is regenerated, and yet the assertions of several of the correspondents seemed to imply that this must be so.

Thus one correspondent in the *Church Times* asks,[1] "Is there anything unreasonable or unscriptural in supposing that even such a Baptism may cause a non-saving intervention of the Spirit, by which the recipient is made, as it were, a dead branch of the Tree of Life, capable, however, of being vivified thereafter without fresh Baptism, when God grants him faith and repentance?" How an intelligent man, acquainted with the barest elements of the Christian religion, could bring himself to put such a suggestion on paper, may well excite our astonishment; but it is easy to see how he felt himself forced, by the exigencies of the position that he had undertaken to defend, to adopt some such monstrous conclusion, and to see nothing unscriptural in it. It never occurred, I suppose, to the writer to reflect that he was imputing to God a line of action exactly

[1] *Church Times*, July 14, 1899.

opposite to that which Christ attributes to Him. Our Lord tells us that every branch in Him that beareth not fruit the Father taketh away; whereas this correspondent actually represents God as taking means to graft dead branches into the vine, which of course can bear no fruit, because they are dead. Neither did it occur to him, I suppose, that he was ascribing to God the work that Christ Himself ascribes to the devil. When the servants of the householder inform their master of the presence of tares in the crop amidst the wheat, he exclaims, "An enemy hath done this!" That is to say, being interpreted, an enemy hath introduced the wicked into the outward Church of God. But this writer wishes us to admit that there is nothing unreasonable or unscriptural in believing that this has been the work of the Holy Spirit of God through the supernatural agency of a divinely appointed sacrament. Our Lord has said some very startling things about the sin of attributing the work of the Holy Ghost to the devil; what would He have said about attributing the work of the devil to the Holy Spirit of God?

### § 5. This Paradoxical Position is Assumed because the System Demands it

But why did this religious teacher suggest anything so monstrous? It was because, no doubt, he felt himself compelled by his system to believe that in some way or other regeneration must attach itself to Baptism, and that only through Baptism could it

be brought about. Hence some diluted form of regeneration must occur even in such a case, albeit "without saving consequences." Some essential element in the process of regeneration must be supplied in Baptism, even when mechanically performed, without the slightest spiritual sincerity on either side; for, if this be not so, the whole "sacramental system" would have to be modified. Hence some such preposterous theory as that which I have been exposing must be invented in order to save the position.

That this is the true explanation of what might otherwise be surprising is further shown by a correspondent in *The Record*, who thus expresses himself:[1] "Nor does the question of the recipient's disposition affect the intrinsic spiritual virtue of the Sacrament, which is effectual because of Christ's institution and promise, although the spiritual meaning of the outward sign may not be appreciated or realised at the moment of Baptism. . . . The New Testament refuses to allow us to contemplate any other beginning of the Christian life than that of our incorporation into Christ, through the visible Church, by Baptism." This is outspoken, and, of course, if this is the conviction of men of this school, it is easy to understand such amazing suggestions as that with which I have just been dealing. If the New Testament refuses to allow us to contemplate any other beginning of the spiritual life than that which occurs at Baptism, clearly, under whatever

[1] *The Record*, June 9, 1899.

conditions an adult is baptized, albeit he may have submitted to Baptism from the most impious motives, his spiritual life must begin then or never.

### § 6. The Deliverance of the Editor of the *Church Times* upon this Point

It might perhaps be pleaded that this was merely the foolish utterance of an inexperienced and thoughtless fledgling, who had ventured out of his nest before his feathers were properly grown; but what can we say when we find that this is practically the position taken by the Editor of the leading organ of the advanced party, in discussing this very point? In concluding his criticism of my pamphlet and my letters, the Editor of the *Church Times* thus comments on a possible case that I had suggested:[1]

"Mr. Aitken put an extreme case—the weak link by which the strength of a chain is tested—of a half-intoxicated man receiving Baptism at the hands of a sceptical priest. He then asked whether the act commands the prompt and obedient intervention of the Holy Spirit to incorporate the guilty recipient there and then into the Body of Christ, and to bestow upon him the benefit of regeneration?

"What would take place in such a case we know not—God only knows—but we are quite sure of this, that, if the man were afterwards to repent, it would not be necessary for him to be baptized a second time; for the germ of divine life would have

[1] *Church Times*, August 4, 1899.

been implanted in him at his sacrilegious baptism, which is what the *ex opere operato* doctrine teaches. According to the 'non-mechanical theory,' it is possible that a man might be baptized half-a-dozen times, and even then *might never be sure that he had been born of water and of the Holy Spirit*" (the italics are mine), "a theory which makes a sacrament instituted by Christ Himself a useless formula, and one on which no dependence whatever could be placed."[1]

Here, then, is an utterance so far authoritative as that it proceeds from the very headquarters, one may say, of the *soi-disant* "Catholic" party, which is absolutely in harmony with the other astonishing utterances that we have just been considering. When we proceed to examine it critically, we notice in it the same indisposition to affirm in unequivocal terms that regeneration occurs in the baptism of an adult, whatever his moral condition, which we have already noticed in the other cases adduced. But we also detect the same disposition to *imply that it does*. It would seem, indeed, as if the spiritual instincts of these good people made them shrink from affirming anything so shocking as that the Holy Ghost regenerates a man who profanes this holy ordinance, by submitting to it without any sort of preparation of heart, or any forsaking of sin; and from implying that He thus attaches a premium to revolting impiety; while their system compels them to believe that this is actually the case.

## § 7. This Deliverance Critically Examined

A careful consideration of this extraordinary utterance constrains us to conclude that, though the writer does not say so in so many words, none the less he finds himself obliged by the exigencies of his theological position to assume that, even in such a case, in some sense or other, regeneration would occur; inasmuch as otherwise the sacrament and the sacramental benefit would be dissociated.

We may brush aside as wholly irrelevant his statement that it would not be necessary for the sacrilegious recipient, on his repentance, to be baptized a second time; for no one suggests that it would be. Not even Baptists affirm that the ordinance should be performed more than once; they only baptize those who have been "sprinkled" (as they would put it) in infancy on the ground that they have never really received Baptism at all. When, therefore, the writer goes on to say, "According to the 'non-mechanical' theory, it is possible that a man may be baptized half-a-dozen times," he is talking wildly, and utterly misrepresenting the position of those whom he attempts to criticise.

Those who hold what he calls the "non-mechanical" theory do not insist on the repetition of the ordinance, *precisely because* they do not believe that the regenerating power of the grace of God is necessarily tied to the ordinance. They do not hold that the outward sacramental act and the inward new birth must be coincident in point of time. On the con-

trary they firmly maintain that the spiritual birth may occur either at the moment of Baptism, which is the normal case, or it may occur before Baptism as in the case of Cornelius, or after Baptism, as it would have had to occur in the case of Simon Magus, had he, subsequently to St. Peter's reproof, become a sincere Christian. Hence their convictions on this subject would be wholly out of harmony with the suggested repetition.

### § 8. That the Editor's Words necessarily imply Regeneration by Sacrilege

But, having cleared away this misrepresentation, we return to the positive conclusions of the paragraph that I have quoted, and observe that the reason why a second Baptism is not necessary is found in the fact (?) that the "germ of life would have been implanted in this man at this sacrilegious Baptism." This is only saying in other words that the man would have been *regenerated by sacrilege;* for to receive the germ of the divine life is to be "born again," as St. Peter puts it, "not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible."

One cannot, however, help observing in passing that, while St. Peter attributes this new birth to the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever, this writer attributes it to a mechanical and sacrilegious act. That we are doing him no injustice, in asserting this, is manifest from his own words; and the inference they suggest, which it is impossible to escape.

Let us look at these words again, "According to the 'non-mechanical' theory it is possible that a man might be baptized half-a-dozen times, and even then might never be sure that he had been born of water and of the Spirit." If these words mean anything, they must mean that in accordance with the "*ex opere operato* theory," which is here explicitly accepted, the man that has been baptized once may *be sure* that he has been born of water and of the Spirit, albeit his Baptism may have been an impious and sacrilegious act, performed, perhaps, for no higher motive than to obtain a situation, where a baptismal certificate was required.

## § 9. The "Germ" Theory Critically Considered

And what is this germ of divine life that is supernaturally communicated as the reward of sacrilege? Who can say how many plausible sophisms are foisted on the unsuspecting Christian public in the form of presumed analogies between things natural and spiritual? Because in the material world organic forms spring from a "germ," therefore, forsooth, we are asked to believe that there is such a thing as a "germ of divine life." Surely, if men would only pause to ask what the words that they use actually mean, instead of allowing themselves to be deluded by some fancied analogy that has no existence, they must needs see the irreverence and indecency of such language.

Indeed, there is not even the excuse of analogy

here, for there is no such thing in nature as a "germ of life." There are living germs—forms of organic matter penetrated by the mysterious energy of life, but the germ is a material substance, the life is an energy, of which we know that it cannot be induced or manufactured by any known process, and therefore it never does, and never can spring *from* a germ, though it can spring *into* one. To speak of a "germ of life," therefore, in the natural world is to speak of what does not exist, and, if there could be degrees of non-existence, to speak of a germ of divine life is to speak of what can, we might say, still less exist.

We have seen that life is not, and cannot be a germ, but resides in a germ; what then is this germ in which it resides, that is introduced into the spiritual nature of the recipient by a sacrilegious Baptism? To ask such a question is to answer it; for it becomes evident at once that the use of such a phrase is only a darkening of counsel with words without knowledge.

We turn from such mischievous figments to the pages of revelation, and find ourselves confronted with such a definite statement as this, "He that hath the Son hath the life, and he that hath not the Son *hath not the life*," whether germinal or otherwise. And, lest there should be any doubt as to how we thus become possessed of the Son of God and His life, St. John goes on to say, "These things have I written *unto you that believe on the Name* of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life" (1 John v. 13, R.V.).

It is only necessary to reflect on what eternal life is, and on the conditions upon which our reception of it is dependent, in order to see how impossible it would be to accept this "germ" theory, even if it were not intrinsically absurd. Eternal life is nothing less than the life of God in the soul of man. It is introduced by "the Spirit of life" Himself into the heart of him who passes from condemnation to justification by faith in Jesus Christ; and it is dependent upon the mystery of His indwelling presence (Rom. viii. 9). It is not brought about by the infusion of germs, but by the personal spiritual contact of the Spirit of God with the spirit of man. It is not a mere potentiality, but the mightiest of all forces that can affect our moral experiences, a power that, when all else has failed, sets him who obtains it free from the law of sin and death (Rom. viii. 2). And he that believeth not, even though he may have submitted to a sacrilegious baptism, has it not; for he "shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth upon him" (John iii. 36).

## CHAPTER II

### THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

### § 10. The Relation of this Dogma of Regeneration by a Mechanical Act to the Sacerdotal Theory of the Church

It might almost seem a waste of words to criticise a position so obviously untenable as that which we have been considering in the last chapter, even though it has been presented by so respectable an authority as the Editor of the *Church Times*; but the more indefensible the position, the greater the need to consider why good and intelligent men condescend to accept it, when one would suppose that all their spiritual instincts must needs revolt against it?

There is only one answer. The whole system is at stake, and unless human ingenuity can avail to defend it here, it must lie open to attack all along the line. For this doctrine of baptismal regeneration does not stand alone; it is absolutely essential to the sacerdotal theory of the Catholic Church; and any uncertainty on this point must throw the whole system into confusion. For the Editor of the *Church Times* only expressed the convictions of his

party when he affirmed that "For weal or woe, Holy Baptism makes a man a member of the one Holy Catholic Church."

This statement might be accepted as approximately true, if those who made it drew any distinction between the outward and visible Church and the inward and spiritual Church, which exists in vital union with her Lord. If there be an outward ecclesiastical corporation, occupying to the inward and spiritual temple very much the relation that the scaffolding does to the permanent structure to whose erection it contributes, it would not seem unreasonable to suppose that admission to it might be dependent upon an external rite, however mechanically performed.

Such an outward corporation would in many respects resemble the ancient Jewish theocracy, and Baptism might be to the one very much what Circumcision was to the other. Circumcision would always be an act of obedience, but need be nothing more; but, as such, it gave to the Jew a right to his place in the chosen nation, though performed in a merely mechanical manner. Analogously, Baptism, considered as presumably—in some sense, at any rate—an act of obedience, and as embodying some kind of profession of attachment to the Christian religion, might be regarded as admitting the recipient, however unspiritual, within the pale of the outward and visible Christian Church.

But those whom the Editor of the *Church Times* represents repudiate any such distinction as I have

been suggesting; for them there is only one Church, and it is visible; and to it belong all the strong statements that New Testament Scripture makes with respect to the Church of Christ.

## § 11. The Teaching of the New Testament with Regard to the Christian Church and Membership in her

According to the New Testament the Church is Christ's body, bound by an organic unity to her Head, and pervaded by His life. Her members are united to Christ as the branches are united to the vine; as the same sap flows through vine and branches, and the same vital energy renders each part of the organic whole capable of performing its proper functions, even so is the Church represented as partaking, in some sense, of the divine nature, and as instinct with spiritual vitality.

To vary the figure, the Church is a spiritual temple, whose builder is God, and all its members are *living* stones, inasmuch as they are built upon a living foundation; and in this sacred fane the Holy Spirit dwells; it is the house of the living God.

In the Epistle to the Ephesians, St. Paul exhibits yet another aspect of the Church in its relation to Christ. She is the Bride of her Lord, who is represented as loving and giving Himself for her, "That He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the Word" (Eph. v. 26, 27, R.V.). Here, then, the Church is represented first as consisting of those who have been cleansed by the

washing of water with the Word; and, second, as being already the affianced Bride of Christ.

Yet another aspect of the same object is presented in his Epistle to the Galatians (Gal. iv. 26), where it seems at any rate probable that she is referred to, in contrast to the Jewish Church, which is spoken of as Hagar and Sinai, as the "Jerusalem which is above, which is free, which is the mother of us all." This figure implies her heavenly origin and her spiritual character. She is not an earthly development but a heavenly creation, and her children are citizens of a heavenly commonwealth. They are the children, not of the bond-woman, but of the free; not born after the flesh, but of promise.

This use of the word "Jerusalem" as the figurative title of the Church, contemplated in that mystic unity which binds in one both her militant and her triumphant elements, probably throws light on the use of a similar phrase in the Epistle to the Hebrews, where we learn that "we are come to Mount Zion, the city of the living God . . . to the general assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven" (Heb. xii. 23). If this "Mount Zion" is identical with the "Jerusalem that is above," referred to in the former passage, both these expressions would seem to be closely connected with that which is specified in the last clause of the verse. If the Church, viewed as the spiritual home of God's people, is referred to as Mount Zion, it scarcely seems possible to avoid the conclusion that "the general assembly and church of the first-born" is the new

spiritual theocracy—the holy nation—to whom, as its citizens, that home belongs. If this be the true exegesis of the passage, the results are important; for in that case there would be no way of avoiding the conclusion that the Church consists of those "whose names are written in heaven." This in itself would be decisive in enabling us to judge how far the Church of the New Testament is identical with the outward Church as it now exists.

### § 12. To understand what the true Church is, we have to consider of whom, according to the New Testament, she is composed

But we have not to fall back upon what may be considered a doubtful exegesis of a highly rhetorical passage in order to form our conclusions as to the spiritual standing and character of those who compose the Church, according to the teaching of New Testament writers. The Catholic Church, or general congregation, is the unified aggregate of any number of individual congregations; and these, again, are made up of individual Christians. As the whole is the aggregate of the parts, it must also be composed of that of which each of the parts is composed. When therefore we ask, Of what elements was the Catholic Church composed in apostolic times according to New Testament writers, an answer is to be found in the descriptions, given in the Epistles, of those who constituted the individual churches to which those Epistles were addressed.

### § 13. St. Paul's Testimony

Space would fail us if we proceeded at all fully to deal with this important and interesting theme, but we may just point out that those whom St. Paul addressed in his Epistles are saluted as "saints," "faithful brethren," "called," "beloved of God." They are spoken of as being called "Jesus Christ's" own (Rom. i. 6), as being "in Christ Jesus," as being quickened from the death in trespasses and sins (Eph. ii. 1), as having been saved (Eph. ii. 8), as having been created in Christ Jesus for good works, as "being justified by faith," as being "children of God by faith in Jesus Christ," and as therefore having the Spirit of God sent into their heart, by whose presence within they were enabled to recognise the divine fatherhood, and to respond to it with the cry "Abba Father."

It is perhaps specially worthy of notice in connection with the subject that we are discussing, that in the very passage which is relied on, as showing that all who are baptized are members of the "one Holy Catholic Church," the Baptism spoken of is represented as being "*in* one Spirit," a phrase which is not without its difficulties, but which seems to contemplate the Holy Spirit, not as the real though invisible agent in a sacramental act, which no doubt He is, but rather as the new element into which those thus baptized were plunged—an element which subsequently seemed to penetrate and pervade their

whole being, just as scientific men tell us that ether penetrates and pervades all material substances. The Apostle seems to be thinking of such a saturation of the soul with spiritual influences as is represented as occurring on the day of Pentecost, when the prophecy of the Forerunner of Christ was fulfilled, "He shall baptize you *in* the Holy Ghost and fire."

The use of this form of speech, and its identity with that employed by the Baptist, has led some expositors of the extremer Protestant type to deny that the sacrament of Baptism is here referred to at all; and this conclusion is, to say the least, capable of a plausible defence. Without, however, adopting such an extreme position, which, in the presence of St. Paul's habitual use of the word "baptize," I should be slow to do, it is enough that we should observe, that it is to the spiritual element in Baptism that the Apostle refers, not to the merely sacramental, as introducing us into the one body; for that body is represented as instinct with spiritual life, and endowed throughout with spiritual gifts and graces.

All who are thus baptized are spoken of as being made to drink of one Spirit, an expression which surely must exclude the idea of the admission of any unspiritual person into this spiritual organism—the body of Christ. And, indeed, throughout the chapter, the treatment of this figure of a spiritual body, one with its Head, and even bearing His name (see 1 Cor. xii. 12, "so also is Christ"), involves the assumption that all who are members of it are possessed of the same spiritual life.

### § 14. Testimony of St. Peter and St. John

Nor is this only the view of St. Paul, amongst New Testament writers, as to the spiritual condition of those who constitute the Church of Christ. St. Peter's testimony is quite as decisive, nay, if possible, even stronger. Its members are, according to this witness, "elect, according to the foreknowledge of God, in sanctification of the Spirit"; they are "begotten again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." He speaks of them as being born to "an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled," while they themselves are "being garrisoned by the indwelling power of God through faith." He describes them as "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God that liveth and abideth forever," which by the Gospel was preached unto them. He refers to them as "an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession." Once they were not a people, but now are the people of God; once they had not obtained mercy, but now they were in the full enjoyment of it; for had they not, as he tells us in his second Epistle, obtained a like precious faith with himself in the righteousness of God.

I need only add that the same assumption of the spirituality of all who constitute the Church of Christ pervades the Epistles of St. John, where we observe that the very least advanced amongst those whom he addresses—the little children—are spoken

of as having their sins forgiven them, and as personally knowing the Father; and it is taken for granted that they all believe on the name of the Son of God, and, as a consequence, are entitled to the joy of knowing that they have eternal life.

### § 15. Conclusion stated with Respect to the Church

This necessarily brief, and far from complete review of what the New Testament teaches with regard to the true Church of Christ, and the elements of which it is composed, enforces the conclusion that she is a spiritual community, whose members are all spiritual persons, possessed of a common life and penetrated, to a greater or less degree, by the influences of the One Spirit. If this be so, it will follow that to this true Church of Christ the unspiritual, and those who are destitute of the new and eternal life, do not belong, whether they have been baptized or not baptized; whether they have been baptized as infants or as adults. Like the baptized Simon Magus they have neither part *nor lot* in the matter, but, instead of being sons, according to promise of the Jerusalem above, that is *free*, they are still in the *bond* of iniquity.

### § 16. The Objection to this Conclusion from the Character of certain Primitive Christians considered

Of course one is familiar with the common answer to this contention; but is it an adequate answer?

Is it an answer at all? Is it not itself founded upon a misconception? It is pleaded that not even the primitive Church was composed of only the good; that evidently there was a great deal of evil at Corinth, for instance; and a great deal of unspiritual, and probably more or less superstitious, legality in the churches of Galatia; and that probably a similar state of things prevailed in other churches. If then, it is argued, men could be unspiritual, and even immoral, and yet be members of the Church in the Apostles' days, not less may the same state of things obtain now.

But here we have first a clear case of *petitio principii*, the question at issue is begged. The point that we are discussing is whether the true Church of Christ consists of all the baptized members of the many Christian churches or congregations scattered throughout the world, or whether it consists only of those in these churches who are in living contact with their Lord. The objector points to certain members of these churches, who appear to have been living otherwise than in such contact with their Lord, and triumphantly claims that they were none the less members of Christ's body, because they belonged to these outward churches.

But were they? Could we believe that Simon Peter, if he had said all that was in his heart, would have told Simon Magus with one breath that he had neither part nor lot in the matter, and with the next breath have assured him that he was "a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom

of Heaven?" Would St. Paul before the repentance of the incestuous man at Corinth have saluted him as a saint and faithful brother?

His own stern injunction, "Put away from among yourselves that wicked person," leaves us no room to doubt what his answer would have been to such an inquiry. The man was to be removed from the pale of the outward Church, surely because, by the automatic operation of the laws of the spiritual world, he was already cut off from contact with the Spirit of God, and therefore had ceased to be a living branch in the vine.

This figure of the vine which our Lord Himself both employs and explains throws light on all such cases. "Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit, *He taketh away*." "If a man abide not in Me *he is cast forth* as a branch, and withered." If this be true, then, surely, any fornicators, idolaters, covetous persons, drunkards, extortioners, and such like at Corinth or elsewhere would, by the automatic operation of the laws of the spiritual world, be cast forth, and would belong to that which the vine signifies no longer. If the vine signifies the Church, then to that Church they would no longer belong. St. Paul tells us that such persons have no inheritance *in the kingdom of Christ and of God*, how can they then be members of Christ's body? And yet it is clear that such were still members of the churches, and thus of the outward Church, and still were Christians in name, at least until a formal sentence of excommunication was recorded against them.

### § 17. That this Objection Misses the Real Point

In the second place we must charge the objector with *Ignoratio Elenchi*, he misses the real point at issue. In referring to the inconsistencies of primitive Christians as a proof that unspiritual men amongst ourselves may none the less belong to the body of Christ, his reasoning is quite beside the mark. We are not discussing what degree of unfaithfulness to grace, and of moral unworthiness, is compatible with a retention of a place in the Church; that is an important inquiry, no doubt, but it is not to the present purpose. The point we are discussing is this, whether men who possess none of the characteristics, and have passed through none of the spiritual experiences, which New Testament writers attribute to all members of the Church, can be part of this mystical body of Christ, just because a certain ordinance has been performed upon them, perhaps in the most perfunctory and mechanical way.

To employ a figure furnished for us in the course of this controversy, which I have already commented upon, the question is, not whether sickly and feeble branches of the vine may still continue to be part of it, and, if so, how long; but whether utterly dead branches can, according to the amazing suggestion of a Neo-Anglican correspondent, be grafted into it. Whether, in fact, God's method of husbandry is to remove dead branches with one hand and to graft them in with the other.

### § 18. That a Surrender here must Involve a Modification of the Sacerdotalist Theory of the Catholic Church

But if the combined forces of revelation, of common sense, and of spiritual instinct enforce a capitulation on this one point, the whole theory of the Church, as held by members of this party, must needs be abandoned, along with the formula of the Editor of the *Church Times*, this, namely, that "For weal or woe, Baptism makes all those who are baptized members of the one Holy Catholic Church." This aphorism will have to be modified into, "Some of those who are baptized, if they possess certain other characteristics, and have complied with certain other distinctly moral conditions, become, by vital union with Christ, members of the Holy Catholic Church." But, inasmuch as compliance with these conditions is a thing known to God alone (for "the Lord knoweth those that are His"), this Church cannot, in the nature of things, be visible here on earth; its epiphany will only take place at the end of the world; when the reapers clear away the tares from the wheat. "Then shall the righteous shine forth like the sun in the kingdom of their Father."

I will not apologise for this somewhat protracted digression upon the subject of the true character and composition of the Church of Christ, for although we have been considering a side issue, it is one that is connected in the closest possible way with the

main thread of our inquiry; and already the consideration of it has, I would fain hope, made the issue before us much clearer. We were led into it by a desire to explain why it is that good, and, we trust, spiritually-minded men, are ready to accept conclusions that one would have supposed would have shocked all their spiritual sensibilities, rather than abandon this dogma of necessary baptismal regeneration *ex opere operato*. We have only to state their theory of the Catholic Church, and then, as it were, work our way backwards, in order to render the true explanation plain.

## § 19. A Statement of the Sacerdotalist Theory of the Catholic Church

The Catholic Church, according to this school of thought, is both a spiritual and also a visible body corporate. In her spiritual character she is the body of Christ, and her members must therefore be in some sense (whether germinally or otherwise) possessed of His life. But, inasmuch as this life has been forfeited by original sin, it is clear that it can only be restored by something in the nature of a new birth. "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of God."

On the other hand, inasmuch as the Church is always visible, membership in her, and therefore participation in her spiritual relations with Christ, must depend on an outward and visible ordinance, and not on any inward and moral conditions of which

no human being can be sure, except the man who is conscious of them, otherwise the Church would cease to be visible; for who could say that any one else besides himself had complied with these conditions.

All who belong to the Catholic Church must be in some sense or other in living contact with their Lord, for otherwise how can they be members of His body? and equally they must be introduced into this relation by an outward act, otherwise how can that body be visible? Therefore, *coûte que coûte*, the doctrine of necessary baptismal regeneration must be maintained, even in the most extreme cases, and where the ordinance is absolutely unaccompanied by sincerity or faith on the part of either officiating priest or recipient, nay, even up to the point of what I have taken leave to call "regeneration by sacrilege."

## § 20. A Word about the Visible Church

I cannot close this chapter without pointing out that the acceptance of the conclusion that the true Church of Christ is a spiritual, and, therefore, at present an invisible body, is not inconsistent with a strong belief in the divine institution of an outward and visible Church. In the days when the New Testament was written, the sad necessity for distinguishing the one from the other had hardly begun to arise, and this explains why no such distinction is made there in any definite form of words. We have to fall back upon inferences in order to

arrive at a conclusion that will explain all the facts that we have to consider.

This is not the place to discuss these. Suffice it to say that on the one hand we find an outward organisation, with its duly appointed officials, and its principles of authority and subordination, designed to maintain external union, which certainly seems to have been both desired and insisted on by the Divine Head of the Church.

On the other hand we discern a spiritual organism pervaded by a divine life, and already existing in vital and organic union with its Head. I have, I hope, shown adequate reason for believing that this is not and cannot be co-extensive with the outward organisation, because multitudes of those who have been baptized into the latter do not possess, and never have possessed the life that is essential to membership in the former.

We can, therefore, only reconcile these two sets of facts by concluding that there is both an inward and also an outward Church; that both claim a divine origin; that it was no part of the divine wish that they should be distinguished from each other; but that, as a matter of fact, they have to be so distinguished, because the two are no longer coterminous, as they almost were at first. It follows that to predicate of the outward what is only true of the inward is to sacrifice spirituality to form, and to induce a Babel of confusion, instead of the divine order of the New Jerusalem.

## CHAPTER III

### REGENERATION AND CONVERSION

### § 21. That the Theory of a Distinction between Regeneration and Conversion is due to the Anomalies involved in the Mechanical Theory of Baptismal Regeneration

We have seen that the wild and unspiritual assumptions on the subject of baptismal regeneration, which we have been considering, are due mainly to the determination of those who belong to the Sacerdotal School in the Church to maintain the position at all costs; that the true Church of Christ is a visible body, differentiated by an external organisation, and dependent for its existence upon certain ecclesiastical conditions.

But, having been driven thus far by the exigencies of controversy, earnest and spiritually minded Sacerdotalists—of whom, thank God, there are so many—cannot be altogether blind to the perilous tendency of such a theory, especially when they hear their Protestant fellow-Christians denounce it as a mischievous snare of the devil, whereby misguided men endeavour to evade the clear, uncompromising claim

of the divine Teacher, "Ye must be born again!" They cannot but see that, taught by itself, this dogma must have a tendency to lead unspiritual persons to regard themselves as spiritual. "Have we not all been baptized," such would say; "and are we not, therefore, regenerated? What lack we yet? If you tell us that our lives are not as good as they should be, we reply that, more or less, this is true of all, and as we are neither very much worse nor very much better than the rank and file of humanity, we see no need to seek for any radical and far-reaching change in our condition. No doubt, as life goes on, we shall improve; at least, we hope so."

It is, I believe, to the practical recognition of this danger, on the part of earnest and spiritual men, that we owe the invention of a supposed distinction between regeneration and what is called *conversion*. We are taught now by many men of this class that, while regeneration is "sacramental," and only sacramental, and can occur but once in a lifetime (since a man cannot be born twice), it needs to be supplemented by moral and spiritual experiences, and, more particularly, by what is called conversion. This consists chiefly in the surrender of the will to the divine authority, and the process will naturally be accompanied with a more or less powerful conviction of sin, and a sincere contrition, leading up to earnest resolutions for the future.

Such a conversion—it is taught by this school—is usually brought about by a proper use of "the Sacrament of Penance," but in a considerable number of

cases, it is fully admitted by most of them, this great change takes place without the formal use of this "means of grace." But in whatever way this change is brought about, and however its phenomena may vary in different cases, it may be described as generally necessary for all; inasmuch as there can be no progress in the spiritual life, until there has been a full and unconditional surrender of the will to God.

### § 22. That it is a Sign of Good Omen that this Distinction should have been Invented

It is a hopeful sign of the times that amongst those who are the strongest and most determined adherents of the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration, as it is held by the Sacerdotal party in the Church, so widespread a disposition may be observed, to insist upon the necessity of "conversion." I rejoice in this, because it is a witness to the recognition of the importance of what is distinctively spiritual and experimental in the religious life, and to the insufficiency of what is merely formal.

No doubt, in some cases, this strong conviction of the necessity of conversion renders even extreme views on the subject of baptismal regeneration comparatively harmless. A great spiritual blessing is sought and found by "repentance towards God and faith in the Lord Jesus," a blessing that involves a most conspicuous change in the spiritual condition and experience of him who is the subject of it; and, whether

he calls it regeneration or conversion, the change is there, and its wondrous results are insured.

### § 23. The Question is not Merely one of Terms

In such cases it might seem as if the dispute between those who maintain and those who repudiate a certain view of baptismal regeneration were rather a logomachy, or conflict about theological terms, than anything more serious. What does it matter by what name we designate a certain spiritual experience, so long as the experience actually does occur? But thus to regard the matter is to take only a superficial view of the situation. If a theory be false we may be sure that it will also be mischievous, although the amount of the harm that it does will vary in different cases. The mischief that flows from it must not be apprised by a reference to those cases that are only slightly affected by it.

### § 24. Are two Distinct Radical Spiritual Changes Required or one only?

If this distinction between conversion and regeneration is a fundamental truth of the Christian religion, those of us who ignore it must do so at the peril of the souls we teach. If two great spiritual changes are necessary in order to introduce us into the full enjoyment of the blessings of the spiritual life, surely our flocks must suffer grievously when they hear their pastors affirm that only one such

change is demanded. And if these two events in the soul's experience are totally distinct from each other, in their intrinsic character, in their phenomena, in the conditions on which they are dependent, and in the results that they induce, surely our teaching must be positively misleading when we suppress all these distinctions.

If we attempt to induce those to seek for the benefits of regeneration who are regenerate already, we are not only beating the air; we are leading people to exhaust their spiritual energies by endeavouring to compass the impossible; while, at the same time, we are diverting them from seeking for the specific blessing that they need. Can such false teaching be sown broadcast without inducing most baleful results? If such results do not follow, this is in itself an argument that the teaching is not false; but it cannot tend to show that erroneous and defective teaching can be given with impunity.

If, on the other hand, one great spiritual change, and one only is necessary, in order to bring us into our proper relations with God, and to render it possible for us to lead a really spiritual life; and if that change is so radical that it deserves to be described as a new birth, any attempt practically to substitute quite a different process or experience for this, must be fraught with the most disastrous consequences to the souls of men. For it is obvious that many will thus be led to conclude that they have passed through the spiritual change which God demands, when nothing of the kind has occurred.

### § 25. The Danger of Confusing a Different Experience with the one Great Change Revealed to be Necessary

Such an inward and spiritual revolution must have a specific character of its own; must be dependent on some special provision, on God's side, and on certain fixed and intelligible conditions on man's side. Hence to put in the place of this some other experience of an altogether different character is to substitute a human fancy for a divine revelation, with the certainty of inducing most disastrous consequences in religious experience.

For, while the change which human ingenuity has invented, and insists upon, will be necessarily distinct from that which the Holy Spirit seeks to bring about, those who have passed through it, or imagine that they have passed through it, will naturally conclude that they have undergone the change which Christ describes as necessary, when they have not even acquainted themselves with its character.

If, indeed, the one great change prescribed by revelation is only, or even mainly, formal, having to do chiefly with our relations with the Church, then, indeed, it may do no particular harm to insist upon the necessity of a further and more distinctively spiritual, or at any rate moral, experience; even though the demand may be arbitrary and unsupported by revelation. Indeed it would seem almost necessary, in some cases at least, considering what

the lives of many nominal Christians are, that something of the kind should be invented.

But if regeneration is, what the word itself would lead us to expect, the most supreme and far-reaching change that is possible to man—a change that affects every element of our nature, by introducing new forces into our manhood, and establishing new relations with God, and creating a new moral condition within; then the substitution of any other experience for this can be nothing less than a snare of the devil, designed to rob us of the enjoyment of the specific benefit that regeneration, and this alone, is specially intended to convey.

True, it may sometimes happen—I would fain hope that it often happens—that under the name of conversion, the specific benefits of regeneration are sought and found by those who believe that regeneration and conversion are things entirely distinct in themselves; and, where this is the case, the pernicious effect of a misleading theory will be reduced to a minimum. But against these cases must be set others, and I am afraid they are numerous, in which a moral amendment, or an earnest resolution, or a determination to become religious are mistaken for the new birth, with the result that the whole religious life is built upon a false foundation. This is what, I fear, not unfrequently happens at Missions, where, after strong teaching about sin, "Resolution Cards" are distributed, and people are urged to make good resolutions. How many mistake this process for a real change of heart!

### § 26. That this Second Change, not being Demanded by Revelation, will not be Recognised as Necessary by Unspiritual Sacerdotalists

These considerations will, I hope, make it clear that I am engaged in no mere academic discussion in examining the relation of regeneration to conversion. It is because issues of the utmost possible practical gravity are at stake that I feel that this question needs to be carefully studied.

But this is perhaps the place in which to say that, while the more earnest and spiritually-minded members of one great party in our Church endeavour, though with indifferent success, to guard against the perilous effects of the bald theory of baptismal regeneration, *ex opere operato*, by insisting upon the necessity of conversion, even in the case of the regenerate, a very large proportion of the members of that party decline to recognise any such necessity, except in the case of notorious offenders. And, indeed, it is not wonderful that this should be so, for when we lay aside the passages in the New Testament that refer to regeneration, what is there left to indicate the necessity for yet another change, distinct from this, to which the designation of conversion may be applied?

That such persons should be able to satisfy themselves that such a change as the New Testament connects with the new birth has actually occurred in the case of all baptized persons is indeed wonderful. But if by any mental process, of which it is difficult

to form an idea, and which it would be still more difficult to characterise, without some danger of appearing either supercilious or uncharitable, such persons can persuade themselves that Baptism does produce invariably such a change, they are surely fully justified in repudiating the contention that, besides this, yet another great spiritual revolution is needful.

### 27. The Serious Nature of the Peril thus Incurred

And it is precisely here that the most serious spiritual peril actually does occur to many who are affected by the crude theory of baptismal regeneration, so generally proclaimed in the pulpits of those who belong to the Sacerdotal party in our Church. I speak that which I do know by sad experience, when I affirm that it is becoming increasingly common to meet with people who are proof against the preaching of conversion, because they have been taught to believe that they are already regenerated.

Such persons, when conversed with, are frequently found to have the vaguest notions on the all-important subject of Redemption, and of its bearing on their case; they seem to know nothing about the experiences of justification, with which the babe in Christ is familiar; they have no settled peace, no "knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of sins." But they are rendered impervious to the spiritual influences by which they, more even than others, one might almost say, need to be affected, because

they have been so well drilled in the dogma of necessary baptismal regeneration, *ex opere operato*.

I feel, then, that in approaching this subject I am dealing, not only with a theoretic error, but with a grave spiritual danger, and one that threatens to become more and more prevalent, as those, whose recognition of the importance of spiritual experience has led them to fall back upon this theory of the necessity of conversion in the case of the regenerate, pass away; and the subtle tendencies of their system, in the direction of what is merely formal and mechanical, more and more develop themselves.

It is the presence of a strong body of really spiritually-minded men, in the ranks of the Neo-Anglicans, that has led to the assertion of this doctrine of the necessity of conversion; but I can well remember the time when it was a comparatively rare thing for a High Churchman either to use the word or to insist upon the thing. The genius of their system was opposed to any such theory of a spiritual change, and not only did they refuse to admit its necessity, they were sceptical as to its reality.

The genius and tendency of the system are the same to-day, but many of those who are wedded to it have felt the full force of the later Evangelical revival. Probably few of those who are thus affected have any idea how much they owe, directly or indirectly, to one of whom it is not for me to speak. But when I hear of faithful Gospel preaching in quarters where its presence excites some surprise, I cannot but think of prayers and tears poured forth in a little country

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church in the remotest extremity of our land, by one whose work on earth was finished more than a quarter of a century ago; and I thank God and take courage.

But good and earnest men do not live for ever, and the stern law of "reversion to type" nowhere asserts itself more inexorably than in the ecclesiastical region. If, therefore, this theory of the necessity of conversion, as distinct from regeneration, has merely been the product of their spiritual instincts, acting under the restrictive influences of party, it will pass away with the men who have invented it. Already I observe a growing disposition to find the equivalent of, and therefore a substitute for, conversion in the practice of auricular confession; while in other cases the teaching on what is called conversion is so defective and indefinite, that I am constrained to doubt whether those who use the word so readily really mean by it what true Evangelicals have ever meant.

### § 28. The First Question, What is Regeneration? The Answer to be sought only in Revelation

Believing then, as I do most firmly, that the words conversion and regeneration represent only different aspects of the same great change, and being firmly persuaded that any attempt to distinguish the one from the other must of necessity induce mischievous results, I will proceed first to consider what regeneration is, according to New Testament teaching on the subject. I will then proceed to consider on what it is conditioned; what are its relations to

the ordinance of Baptism, first in the adult and then in the infant, and what its relations to that faith of the heart, on which, again and again, the salvation of the human soul is represented as depending, on man's side, just as, on God's side, it is effected by the action of divine grace.

When we clearly understand what regeneration involves, we shall better be able to judge whether it needs to be supplemented by another process, bearing a different name, and supplying moral and spiritual elements in which it is defective. Let us reflect, to begin with, that we can know nothing about regeneration except by a direct and specific revelation. This is not a truth that might be deduced from considerations of what is called natural religion. Neither is it a matter in which we have to depend upon some supposed tradition of the Church. This radical change which God the Holy Ghost undertakes to work in the hearts of men is of such vital importance, and is so distinctly supernatural in its character, that we have a right to expect that its nature, its conditions, the divine provision upon which it is dependent, and its spiritual consequences, shall all alike be matters clearly revealed; and in this expectation we are not disappointed.

Hence, whatever weight may be assigned to abstract considerations of Christian philosophy in other matters; and however far in other cases we may feel ourselves influenced by the testimony of Christian tradition, here, at least, we are constrained to form our conclusions in accordance with the very

ample revelation that has been made. Indeed we must, it seems to me, either repudiate the doctrine of regeneration altogether, and say with Nicodemus, and not a few modern theologians, "How can a man be born when he is old?" or we must accept it as it is explained in the New Testament Scriptures.

It is not within our competence to accept the doctrine with certain limitations of our own, excluding from the connotation of the term regeneration the larger and more important part of its contents. We cannot make a doctrine of regeneration to suit our systems; we must adjust our systems to the revealed doctrine of regeneration, or else abandon them.

### § 29. That Regeneration is the One Radical and Essential Change declared by Revelation to be Necessary

When we address ourselves to the revelation made to us on the subject, the first thing that strikes us is that this mysterious new birth is the one radical and essential spiritual change, specified in the New Testament as necessary alike for all. It is a radical change, because it makes the tree good, and renders all subsequent fruitfulness possible; it is an essential change, because it affects the very essence of Christian life and character, differentiating the condition and experience of the true Christian from those that belong to other men. No other change of at all a similar character is referred to by our Lord or by New Testament writers.

The life of the progressive Christian will indeed be a continual process of change "from glory unto glory, by the Lord the Spirit," but this change will be a matter of degree, and will neither be radical nor essential. There will also be cases where a grievous fall—such as that of Simon Peter—or a backsliding condition, will call for a great and marked change in the way of spiritual restoration, such as was implied in our Lord's words to that fallen Apostle, "When thou art *converted*, strengthen thy brethren;" but all such experiences are abnormal, and are only rendered necessary by special circumstances.

I do not forget that our Lord uttered the memorable words, "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven;" but, if our Lord was there referring to a great and radical change that must be undergone by all, what was it but the great regenerative change insisted on in the third chapter of St. John, viewed in one special aspect? If, on the other hand, He was referring to some particular evil habit of mind which the disciples had been yielding to, and needed to renounce, the statement is no longer of general application, and cannot be quoted to show the universal necessity of conversion as a definite moral or spiritual change distinct from regeneration. It is to this latter explanation of the words that I should myself incline. Our Lord was especially warning His disciples against the spirit of self-assertion. From this they needed to be converted, if they were to find entrance into the Kingdom of God.

### § 30. That the Necessity for Regeneration springs from the Fact of the Fall

We lay it down, then, without fear of contradiction, that New Testament Scripture knows of, and inculcates the necessity of, one and only one radical and essential change, as the condition of participation in the privileges of the kingdom of God. When we proceed to inquire into the nature of this change, and to seek for an explanation of its necessity, we are thrown back upon that theory of "a fall," which is so prominent in the writings of St. Paul, and seems to be implied, even where it is not definitely stated, in the Epistles of the two other theological writers of the New Testament, St. Peter and St. John.

The very idea of the necessity of a new birth seems to imply that the human race has fallen, in some strange way, from its normal condition; and that therefore men can only be restored by something in the nature of a moral miracle. St. Luke traces the genealogy of man right back to God, and claims for the first man a divine parentage. If, therefore, nothing had happened to interfere with the normal relations of the creature to the Creator, each particular man born into the world would have been inheritor of a divine nature, and possessor of a divine life; and thus regeneration would have been unnecessary, and, indeed, impossible.

However much opposed this theory of a fall may

be to certain forms of modern thought, and to theories of evolution which involve a doctrine of *a rise*, not of *a fall*, we, as Churchmen, are by our formularies definitely committed to the Pauline teaching on this subject; and, as both the great parties in the Church are substantially at one upon this point, it is not necessary to discuss it further. Suffice it to say that this new birth is part of that remedial economy of grace by which God proposes to save man from the results of the fall. It may help us, therefore, to form an idea of what this great change is, and why it should be necessary, if we contemplate for a few moments some, at any rate, of the more obvious of these results.

## § 31. The Results of the Fall

They would seem to have been, first, physical; second, spiritual; third, moral. Of the physical results it is not necessary now to speak, as they are not affected by any regeneration that can occur in this present world. Physical death, and all "the ills that flesh is heir to," must remain as an outward and visible witness to God's judgment against human sin, until the final *regeneration* (Matt. xix. 28), when the completed triumph of redemption shall be exhibited in the abolition of death and the glorification of the human body. But for this we have still to wait.

Of the spiritual results of the fall, the first and most prominent would seem to have been the loss of man's proper relations with God, and the consequent

forfeiture of that eternal life, which is the proper heritage of the most favoured of all God's creatures. This seems to be illustrated in the book of Genesis by the figure of the Tree of Life, and man's exclusion from it after his fall. Man in Eden seems to have been free to eat of this mystic tree; but, as soon as sin came between man and God, the cherub with the flaming sword was commissioned to guard the Tree of Life from the approach of the fallen creature.

Further, this fall, which separates the race from God, and stems the flow of the life of God into the soul of man, producing a condition which Scripture speaks of as a state of death, is represented as setting up a new and abnormal relation between man and "the principalities and powers" of darkness in the spiritual world. Where God has been excluded, there Satan and his evil spirits are represented as rushing in to take possession of our desecrated nature.

When our Lord went so far as to say to the Pharisees, "Ye are of your father the devil," He did not, of course, mean to imply that some men are sprung from the devil, just as others are descended from God. Such an idea would be rank Dualism, and with this our Lord had no sort of sympathy. Satan is not an independent creator, but he seems to be capable of invading human hearts with a malign personal influence analogous in its operation to that spiritual force by which the Holy Spirit affects those that submit themselves to Him.

The effects of this spiritual invasion of our nature are discoverable in the moral results of the fall. It is not necessary here to discuss the question how far the evil that is in us is the effect of a morally diseased condition, and how far the product of a malign spiritual influence; it seems reasonable to conclude that it is due to both these causes; but, however it may be caused, we recognise as a result of the fall a certain bias in the wrong direction of which we are conscious, even from early years; a weakening of our powers of moral resistance to evil, and an indisposition to love and enjoy the things of God.

We need not go any further into this mysterious subject in order to indicate the character of that great spiritual change which the New Testament describes as necessary for all, and to explain and demonstrate its necessity. It may be as well, however, in passing, to call attention to the obvious consideration that, where human lives thus start wrong, and out of their proper relations to God, it is not a thing to be surprised at, that they should subsequently go from bad to worse, and that the occurrence of actual transgressions, and the increasing tyranny of moral evil within, should render such a radical change all the more obviously necessary.

# CHAPTER IV

## THE GOSPEL REVELATION ON THE SUBJECT OF REGENERATION

### § 32. Regeneration as Described by St. Paul, in its Aspect of Justification

HAVING called attention in our last chapter to the fact that regeneration is remedial, and has been rendered necessary by the fall of man, and having indicated briefly some of the results of that fall, we are in a position to understand more clearly the nature of that great change, which Christ describes as a New Birth, and on which He insists as the condition of entering the kingdom of God. It must be an undoing by grace of that which the fall has done, and a restoration of man in his spiritual condition and relations to a state at least as satisfactory as that which he would have occupied, had the fall never occurred. In some respects it may truly be alleged that the position of the justified and regenerate sinner is a higher one than ever belonged to unfallen man, but to discuss this is beside our present purpose.

Regeneration then must involve, to begin with, a

change of relation between man and God. There must needs be a repudiation of the attitude of rebellion, a full moral submission to the divine claim, and an acceptance of the proffered reconciliation on God's own terms. For, clearly, until we are restored to our proper relations with God, we are not in a position to receive back our forfeited life from God, or to claim the privileges of spiritual sonship, or realise the moral benefits that flow from the restoration of spiritual vitality.

In the teaching of St. Paul this change of relation is represented as brought about by a quasi-judicial process, closely connected with, and dependent upon, the atoning work of Christ, to which he gives the name of *justification*. This, according to St. Paul, is something more than mere forgiveness, although it includes this. It is brought about on God's side by the death and resurrection of the Representative Man, who "was made sin for us"; while on man's side it is conditioned upon our being content to be by faith thus represented in Him; and from this great change the most definite and important moral results are represented as flowing. Let the Apostle describe this experience in his own language—

"I through the law," he exclaims, "died to the law, that I might live to God; I have been crucified with Christ, yet I live—no longer I—but Christ liveth in me; and the life I now live in the flesh, in faith I live it—faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Gal. ii. 19, 20). "We thus judge that one died for all, therefore all

died; and He died for all, that they who live should no longer live unto themselves, but to Him who for their sake died and rose again. . . . Wherefore if any man is in Christ Jesus he is a new creature; the old things are passed away, behold they are become new; but all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself" (2 Cor. v. 14–19). "Our old man" (that is to say, our fallen nature, with its evil habits and character) "hath been crucified together with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin" (Rom. vi. 6).

### § 33. That this Change, though so Complete, is only once named by him Regeneration, but in that one case the Significance of the Term is not Doubtful

Surely nothing can be more thorough and complete than the change here described, both in its effects on our relations with God, and in its far-reaching moral results. The Apostle is warranted in calling such a change justification, because the sinner is here regarded as undergoing the sentence of the law in his fallen manhood, represented by the great unfallen Man, and as being now a partaker of a new life, in which he stands accepted "in the Beloved" before God. It is worthy of remark that, although St. Paul is our great teacher on the subject of Baptism, he only once uses the word regeneration; and never employs its cognate terms to indicate the great change of which he tells us so much,

except when he speaks of that spiritual relationship which is created through it, between the evangelist and his spiritual children. In this sense he speaks of having begotten the Corinthians in the Gospel, and of having begotten Onesimus in his bonds.

But in the only passage in which he uses the word regeneration, there can be no doubt of his using it as referring to the same great change which he elsewhere describes in so many and such striking figures and phrases. Here are his words, "But when the kindness of God our Saviour, and His love toward man appeared, not by works done in righteousness which we did ourselves, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by His grace we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Titus iii. 4–7).

When St. Paul does speak of regeneration it is evident what he means by it, and no sort of encouragement is given here to those who, under the influence of the exigencies of controversy, have felt disposed to assign to the word a somewhat shallow and restricted significance. The regeneration that St. Paul here speaks of is no mere change in respect of privilege or ecclesiastical relationship, no mere imparting of a certain undefined potentiality to the soul, no mere implanting of a germ, whatever that mysterious but well-worn expression may signify. The regeneration here referred to is a definite act of salvation (the verb is in the Aorist), it is a washing away of sin, it

is a spiritual renewal, inducing justification by the grace of God, and rendering the regenerate an heir of eternal life.

There can be no doubt or question but that it is the same great change that he is here referring to which elsewhere he speaks of as a translation from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of the Son of God's love, as a resurrection from death into life, as a passage from a state of condemnation into a state of justification. Elsewhere, as well as here, he speaks of this change as actually saving those affected by it, that is to say, he regards it as taking them out of a state of present danger into a state of present safety, from a condition in which they not only were in darkness, but actually were darkness, into a condition in which they became light in the Lord.

It is a change from a state of enmity against God to a state of peace with God; from a carnal into a spiritual condition. Those who are affected by it, instead of being without God and without hope in the world, begin to enjoy the blessedness of not only being brought nigh, but of having Christ within them the hope of glory.

Lastly, as bearing more particularly on the idea of regeneration, it is a change in which we cease to be children of wrath, and become children of God by faith in Jesus Christ. Perhaps the most complete and succinct statement of this great change was given by our blessed Lord Himself when He was assigning his commission to this same Apostle. "I send thee," He exclaims, "to open their eyes" (an intellectual change

affecting, however, the conscience as well as the understanding), "to turn them from darkness into light" (a moral change), "and from the power of Satan unto God" (a spiritual change), "that they may receive remission of sins, and an inheritance amongst all them that are sanctified, by faith that is in Me."

### § 34. The Teaching of St. Peter shown to be to the same Effect

The consideration of these words of our Lord, and of these emphatic statements of St. Paul, must leave no doubt on any honest mind as to the radical and essential character of the change effected by "the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost." But it may add to the completeness of our review of the teaching of New Testament Scripture on this subject, if we notice how fully this teaching is corroborated by what we find on this subject in the Epistles of St. Peter and St. John.

The former begins his Epistle by referring to this new birth, which he connects with the resurrection of Christ, just as we have already seen that St. Paul does in more than one passage in his writings. He represents this change as inducing a living hope, because it renders him who has undergone it already an "inheritor of the kingdom of heaven." In the same chapter he speaks of these converts whom he is addressing as being "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, that liveth and abideth forever." And he follows up this assertion of their birth through the Word, by calling

them new-born babes, and admonishing them to desire the sincere milk of the Word that they may grow thereby. That which has brought about their birth is to be the means of inducing their growth and development. In language almost identical with that of St. Paul, he represents the believer as dying in Christ's death to sin that he might live to righteousness.

In the one only passage in which he refers to Baptism he speaks of it as saving us, using the very same language that St. Paul does of the washing of regeneration. St. Peter and St. Paul are at one in pointing to the moment of Baptism as the moment of salvation, and in each case because of the mystic relation between the sacrament and the death and resurrection of Christ from the dead.

St. Peter is, however, careful to remind us that the value of the ordinance lies not in a mere external and ceremonial lustration, but in the inward appeal that a good conscience, cleansed from all sense of defilement by the forgiveness of sins, must needs make towards a reconciled God. This is most probably the meaning of what is confessedly a very difficult expression.

### § 35. The Teaching of St. John shown to be to the same Effect

When we turn to St. John we are conscious of a certain amount of difficulty in dealing with the apparently uncompromising language in which he insists on the necessary moral results of this spiritual change. Whatever be the true explanation of his somewhat

startling statements, one thing is clear, that nothing can be further from his mind than any disposition to regard regeneration as conveying merely a potentiality of grace, and involving no apparent practical moral consequences. So far from this, he tells us, "he that hath been begotten of God doth not commit sin, but his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot commit sin, because he is begotten of God"; "he keepeth himself and the wicked one toucheth him not." And as he is thus preserved from sin, so he is victorious over the world in the strength of his faith in Christ.

Different people will explain these strong sayings in different ways, so as to harmonise them with the equally unqualified assertion of the same Apostle that "if we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us." No doubt the apparent discrepancy between the two statements must admit of some satisfactory explanation, and it seems to me most natural to conclude, first, that St. John has before his mind in writing these words that sin which he himself defines as a breach of, or even a defiance of, the law (*ἀνομία*), that is to say wilful transgression of the known law of God, perpetrated with the full intention of transgressing; and, second, that he uses the present tense with that strong sense of continued and habitual action, which is characteristic of the Greek *Present*.

When he affirms in analogous language that "he that doeth righteousness is righteous," he does not surely mean us to understand that the performance of a single righteous action induces, or is proof of a

righteous condition and habit, or who would there be that might not on this ground claim to be righteous. What he must surely mean is that the man whose habit of life it is to do righteous acts is a righteous man; and if this be the true explanation of his words, we are not departing from the principles of a reasonable honest and consistent exegesis, if we interpret these strong statements, with respect to the moral character of him who is born of God, after the same manner.

But my purpose in this volume is not to discuss the exegesis of difficult passages, but to press the general conclusion, from which there is no honest escape, this, namely, that St. John expected the most marked and definite consequences *of a moral kind* to flow from real regeneration; and that he would have repudiated with horror the idea, that any man, who from his earliest years had lived a life of ungodliness and sin, such as thousands of our baptized lead, ever had been born of God.

## § 36. Our Lord's Teaching on the Subject of the New Birth

Having thus considered the teaching of the Epistles on the subject of the new birth, it is time that we turned to the *locus classicus* of this subject, which undoubtedly is the third chapter of St. John. Our Lord was approached by a member of the Sanhedrim, a man of religious thought and habit, who felt drawn to this strange teacher, whose ministry was attracting so much attention, alike by

the miracles that accompanied His teaching, and by the novelty and originality of that teaching itself. He approaches our Lord as one theological teacher might approach another, with a view, no doubt, to friendly theological discussion.

Towards this good sort of man, who approached Christ, at least, in an attitude of sympathetic appreciation, Christ's manner is characterised by a certain abruptness, almost amounting to severity, which probably caused no slight embarrassment, and even dismay, to His visitor. This is surely intended to teach us something; and it is a lesson that men are very slow to learn. Had this particular revelation been made to the weeping penitent that washed Christ's feet in the house of Simon, we should perhaps have been inclined to conclude, that it is only in the case of great sinners that such a change is called for. But when this startling statement is, as it were, hurled at the heart of Nicodemus in the most unequivocal and uncompromising terms, we are bound to conclude that this change is alike necessary in the case of all, the moral and the immoral, the religious and the profane.

### § 37. Analysis of our Lord's Discourse

When we analyse this discourse, we find that it contains the following intimations with respect to the new birth. *First*, that for all a new birth, or a birth from above, is a necessity, if we are to see and enter the kingdom of God. *Second*, that this birth is twofold in its character, having an outward sacramental element and also an inward and spiritual

element, the man must be born of water and of the Spirit. *Third*, that the result of this regeneration is the birth of what our Lord calls "spirit," whatever He may have meant by the term, in the heart of the regenerate. *Fourth*, that he that is thus born again of the Spirit is like the wind in its apparent freedom and spontaneity; "where the Spirit of God is, there is liberty."

I may say in passing that in my judgment few texts in the Bible have been more strangely distorted than this last. The words are usually expounded as teaching that the action of the Holy Ghost is as unaccountable, and as much beyond our ken, as is the motion of the wind; but this is not what our Lord says. His words are perfectly plain and simple, "So is every one that is born of the Spirit"; and it was this description of a new form of religious life, that offered so violent a contrast to all that Nicodemus had been accustomed to associate with the idea of religion, that elicited from him an expression of amazed perplexity, "How can these things be?" The very thought of them seemed, as we say, to take his very breath away.

*Fifth*, in answer to this question of bewildered astonishment our Lord replies by a reference to the lifting up of the serpent in the wilderness; as though He would say, This change, that seems to you so incredible, is brought about by a process of death and resurrection, such as is illustrated in that story of the wilderness. There the natural life was forfeited at the bite of the fiery serpent, but a new and resurrection life was given back in response to the

look of faith; and thus the stricken man was born again by a process of death and resurrection.

Such is the character of the revelation made in this most important passage, and to complete the teaching of St. John, on this momentous topic, in this Gospel, we have only to consider those words upon the same subject which give so much of impressiveness to the opening sentences of the first chapter of his Gospel, in which he tells us that those who received Christ received also authority to become sons of God on their believing in His name. And he adds, "which were born not of blood nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." It is then a supernatural process, brought about by a direct personal intervention of God Himself; and therefore cannot be induced by any merely formal act, mechanically performed, without any more than a verbal reference to God and His will.

### § 38. Summary of the Teaching on the Subject of Regeneration Conveyed to us by the Passages Referred to

Having thus carefully considered the teaching of the New Testament on this subject, we are in a position to make some definite statements with regard to regeneration, and to summarise what we have learnt somewhat as follows. It is clear—

1st. That regeneration is the one and only great spiritual change, radical and essential in its character, that is necessary alike for all, if we would enter into the kingdom of God.

2nd. That this change is a new birth, rendering

him who is affected by it a new creature, and bringing about a new spiritual condition, called by our Lord "spirit" (John iii. 6).

3rd. That this birth has an outward and an inward part; it is by water and by the Spirit.

4th. That by this new birth, in its completeness, we are incorporated into the one body, and admitted into the kingdom of God.

5th. That this new birth produces the most important spiritual effects in the case of him who experiences it; *e.g.*, it restores him to his forfeited relations with God, so that now all things are of God; it places him in a state of present salvation; it assures him of the pardon of his sins; it justifies his soul, and gives him peace with God; it translates him from darkness into light; it breaks the power of sin, and gives liberty to the captive (Rom. vi. 2, 6); it introduces a new and eternal life into the man; it makes him, in a sense in which he was not so before, God's child; it places him in Christ Jesus, and renders him no longer condemned, but accepted in the Beloved.

6th. That this new birth also produces a great moral change, an inward sense of liberty, which renders him who has it free as the wind in the spontaneity of his religious life. He serves God not by submitting to an external authority, but by yielding to a new desire, a spiritual impulse, which asserts itself within; and this induces an indisposition to yield consciously to sin, and a capacity to fulfil, by the indwelling power of the Holy Ghost, the righteous claim of God's law.

7th. That this new birth has been rendered possible on God's side by the death and resurrection of Christ, through which a new and spiritual life is imparted to the new-born soul; it is therefore a birth by death and resurrection.

8th. That although the power whereby the change is effected is divine, yet its occurrence is dependent upon compliance with certain definite conditions on man's side, and takes place only when these have been fulfilled. The new birth is therefore, it may be said, brought about by God, on the fulfilment of certain specified conditions on man's side.

9th. That these four things are represented as having to do with this new birth, and as being in different respects the means of bringing it about—1. The death and resurrection of Christ; 2. The Word of God; 3. The sacrament of Baptism; 4. Real heart-faith in the person and work of Christ.

10th. That while the first and second of these (*i.e.* Christ's death and resurrection, and the Word) may be described as constituting the divinely supplied provision for the bringing of this change about, the second and third of these (*i.e.* the ordinance of Baptism and faith, though in different ways) are to be regarded as the conditions, on man's side, upon which it is contingent.

### § 39. That the Doctrine of Regeneration thus Revealed is Incompatible with "the Germ Theory"

I trust that I have succeeded here in stating succinctly the divine revelation that has been made to us upon this all-important subject; nor do I think

that any of the points that I have here presented can be disputed by the honest student of the New Testament Scriptures. But if the description of regeneration here offered be a revelation, and we accept it as such, it is scarcely necessary, surely, to point out that regeneration cannot, without violence being done to this revelation, be regarded as the mere introduction of a germ, which may or may not grow and develop; nor as the imparting of a moral or spiritual potentiality, of the practical results of which no sign is shown in the subsequent careers of, at least, many of those who have been its recipients.

Even if we admit, as I, for one, would fully admit, that human freedom is not superseded by the gift of life in regeneration, and that it still remains possible, according to our Lord's teaching, for a true and living branch in the spiritual vine to become fruitless, and ultimately to be removed; it none the less is clear, from the revelation that we have been considering, that for a time, at any rate, definite moral and spiritual results, affecting consciousness, and influencing conduct, *must be induced* by anything deserving the name of spiritual regeneration; and if no such results, even for a time, occur, we are by this divine revelation constrained to believe that no spiritual regeneration has taken place. We will reserve for our next chapter the discussion of the terms upon which, on our side, this benefit is offered us all.

# CHAPTER V

## A CONSIDERATION OF THE CONDITIONS OF REGENERATION ON MAN'S SIDE

### § 40. That God cannot have Ordained Alternative Conditions.

HAVING stated clearly, as I hope, what the New Testament teaches to be the character of that great change, to which we give the name of regeneration, it remains for us to proceed to consider the terms and conditions upon which, so far as we are concerned, the enjoyment of this inestimable benefit is conditioned. Here, again, the appeal must needs be to revelation, for natural religion knows nothing about regeneration, and therefore can teach us nothing about its conditions; while the conflicting voices and inconsistent theories of many Christian teachers are more likely to bewilder than to help.

I have spoken of the ordinance of Baptism, and the moral attitude which we call faith, as constituting together the conditions upon which, so far as we are concerned, the enjoyment of the benefit of regeneration depends. But our next inquiry must needs be, Are these two conditions, or two elements in one condition? If we find that sometimes in New

Testament Scripture this great change is represented as dependent on Holy Baptism without any mention of faith, while in other passages it seems equally clearly dependent upon faith, without any mention of Baptism, what is the inference that we are to draw?

Not, certainly, that these are alternative conditions, and that we may exercise our option as to which of them we may prefer. It is ridiculous to suppose that some of us may be regenerated by Baptism without any specific faith in the redeeming work, and in the Person of Christ, while others of us may be regenerated by such faith, without troubling ourselves about the ordinance. To state such a theory is to expose its absurdity. God in revelation does not deal in alternative methods; He adopts that method which He knows to be best for the end that He has in view, and, having adopted it, He adheres to it. It would be a reflection upon His wisdom were He to admit an alternative method.

### § 41. Has God Ordained two Conditions of Regeneration or only one?

Laying this aside as an impossible solution of our problem, there are only two other possible theories, and between them our choice must lie. I will state each in the form of an inquiry. Are we to believe (1st) that the benefit of regeneration is contingent upon compliance with two distinct conditions, the one an outward sacramental act, and the other the presentation of an inward moral attitude—conditions so distinct from each other that the only connection

between them is the positive precept which demands both? Or are we to believe (2nd) that the sacrament has been ordained to concentrate our faith upon a definite issue, and thus to be its normal and visible expression? Are we to believe that there is but one condition, a true and heart-felt faith, but that the sacrament is the embodiment of this faith in action; is it what St. James would call the work by which the faith is made perfect?

It must be admitted that the former of these two views is that which is most commonly held; and indeed it has been accepted, almost without question, by numbers of Protestant Christians, who have not the slightest sympathy with Sacerdotalism. It has been, no doubt, felt by such that God as the Sovereign Author of mercy has a perfect right to attach, if He so please, even an arbitrary condition to the grant of salvation; and that we have no right to assume that this sacrament is an arbitrary condition, even if we cannot adequately explain why it should have been imposed. At any rate, it is felt by such that the very symbolism of the ordinance is impressive; and that the necessity of bearing witness by symbolism to the great truth of redemption may account for the positive ordinance, which stands as the second condition of regeneration.

### § 42. The Sacerdotalists' Explanation of the Sacramental Condition

Those, on the other hand, who belong to the Sacerdotal school of thought look upon this condition

in a very different light. To them it seems that the sacrament is the efficacious means whereby the new life is imparted, faith being not so much the condition of its being imparted, as of its being enjoyed. The ordinance is the means whereby God conveys, rather than a means whereby man receives.

Just as in an electric bath the water conveys the curative force of the electricity to the patient, so in the baptismal laver the very element of water is, as it were, penetrated and pervaded by some subtle and mysterious spiritual influence; so that by the sacrament, what is called "an extension of the Incarnation" is brought about. That is to say, just as Christ Himself was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, so His divine yet human nature is introduced into our manhood through the baptismal medium, albeit this mystic deposit may remain in abeyance for years, producing no sort of moral effect on the life, character, or conduct of the individual.

Such a view of the case differs very widely from that which I have just referred to as being held by many who have no sympathy with Sacerdotalism; yet both have this in common, that they each represent regeneration as contingent upon two distinct and mutually independent conditions, having nothing to do with each other beyond the fact that they are both enjoined.

I am bound, however, in all fairness to admit that, if the facts of the case, as they may be gathered from Revelation, justify this theory of the divine appointment of two distinct conditions of

regeneration, the Sacerdotal explanation would seem, on the surface at any rate, the more reasonable of the two. There is at least an intelligible *raison d'être* for such a second sacramental condition, if it is designed to bring about results so mysterious, yet so important.

The indwelling presence of the new Adam within the regenerate heart is at once the supremest mystery and the crowning glory of the Christian dispensation (Col. i. 27). If therefore God has been pleased to attach this, for reasons known only to His divine wisdom, to the performance of a certain rite, in however perfunctory and mechanical a fashion that rite may be performed, we can only endeavour to bow our reason to His superior wisdom, and thankfully avail ourselves of the benefit offered. If He had been pleased to attach half-a-dozen heterogeneous conditions to His grant of the new life, surely we should have had no right to complain, so long as the benefit was none the less within our reach, though perhaps it might have been impossible to suppress our surprise.

### § 43. A Discussion of the Evidence on which this Question must be Decided

I will therefore address myself to the necessary task of discussing first this particular theory of the conditions of regeneration, rather than the Sacerdotal explanation of it; and if it can be shown, as I fully believe it can, to be a mistake, its supposed Sacerdotal explanation will fall with its fall.

Our first duty is to acquaint ourselves with the phenomena of the case, as upon these our theory

must be based. What are they? I will answer by laying down the proposition that throughout the book of the Acts of the Apostles, and also throughout the Epistles, one and the same great change, including every part and element of it, is represented as sometimes conditioned upon faith, without any reference to Baptism, and sometimes upon Baptism without any overt reference to faith. The theory which alone will satisfy the exigencies of the case must be one that will explain this phenomenon.

### § 44. The Place of Repentance

In proceeding to consider my grounds for this statement, it may be as well to say parenthetically, that, if I do not refer to repentance as a condition of regeneration, it is not because I ignore it; but because I regard it as a moral pre-requisite, without which no one will be disposed to seek for regeneration, rather than a specific condition upon which the grant of regeneration is contingent. In other words, no act of faith can be sincere, and of the heart, that is not preceded by that "repentance whereby we forsake sin." The problem that we are discussing may more accurately be thus stated: *How and under what condition, or conditions, may a repentant sinner obtain the benefit of regeneration?*

### § 45. The Condition insisted upon on the Day of Pentecost

In our examination of the evidence that lies before us, we will begin with the Acts of the Apostles, and

here, first with that memorable occurrence, which has been spoken of as, in some sense, the birthday of the Christian Church. The direction given by St. Peter and his fellow-workers on the Day of Pentecost to the awakened multitude was, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you unto the remission of your sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."

Here if regeneration is contingent upon the fulfilment of two distinct and disconnected conditions, it must appear strange that one of them is altogether ignored; for not a word is said of faith in Christ. But if, in accordance with the second of the two theories of the connection between these conditions which I have indicated above, Baptism is expressly designed to concentrate faith upon a specific issue—the redeeming work of Christ,—and is therefore the eloquent and sacramental expression of that faith, the difficulty vanishes.

But surely such an explanation is suggested, to say the least, by what immediately follows: "They then that received his word were baptized." Surely that word and "the many other words" then spoken, would contain an explanation of the fact that to be baptized was to descend into Christ's grave, and leave their old selves there. This "word" could only be received by faith, and that faith would express itself, far more forcibly than by any words, in the act of Baptism.

Just reflect what Baptism was to those convicted souls. It was a breaking with all their past, a severing themselves from all their former associations,

by an open avowal of their faith; surely it could hardly fail to be also a concentrated expression of their faith. If this were so, it is easy to understand why faith is never mentioned; otherwise, how can this be explained?

### § 46. The Condition implied by Directions given in two other Cases

In the second incident, where St. Peter appealed to the multitude after the healing of the impotent man, no reference occurs to Baptism in the direction given. "Repent ye therefore, and be converted (R.V., turn again), that your sins may be blotted out," exclaimed the preacher; but he says no word about Baptism. The meaning of the word which the Revised Version, not very felicitously, perhaps, renders "turn again," is not specially clear; but we are helped to catch its significance by what follows. They are called upon to turn again with a view to the forgiveness of their sins; and a reference to other passages in which the forgiveness of sins is spoken of, can leave no doubt on our minds that the turning to God, revealed in Christ, here specified, was that act of faith by which the soul looks towards, and rests itself upon, the divine object.

We may say then, at least, that faith is implied here as the condition of regeneration, but nothing is said about Baptism. Why were not both mentioned? The answer is easy, if the sacrament was the recognised and normal expression of faith; the omission is amazing if Baptism and faith are two

distinct conditions, differing from each other in kind, with both of which we have to comply.

In the case of the Ethiopian Eunuch, it is not Philip, but his convert, that proposes Baptism. In the best MSS. of the passage nothing is recorded in the narrative about faith ; but it is sufficiently obvious that St. Philip must already have explained to the Eunuch the nature of Christian Baptism, and its close connection with that redeeming work of Christ, of which the Eunuch had just been reading in Isaiah, otherwise how could he have suggested the ordinance?

A later scribe, feeling the necessity of insisting upon faith, introduces a reference to it on Philip's part in the words, "If thou believest with all thine heart thou mayest;" and this interpolation has a value of its own, as acquainting us with a very early baptismal formula. But the words belong to a later period, when faith had come to be regarded as the condition pre-requisite to Baptism, and no longer found its expression in the baptismal act. It smacks of the days when catechumens were kept waiting for a season, in order that their faith might be tested, not of those early days in which the baptismal act was the primal expression of their faith.

### § 47. The Condition in the Case of St. Paul

The next case in point is a very important one, and one that fully supports what, for convenience sake, I will call *the second theory*. It is usual to speak of the conversion of St. Paul as occurring at the moment of his meeting with our Lord ; it would

be more accurate, however, to refer to this as the moment of his conviction. When a man is, in the full sense of the word, "converted," he puts on the garment of praise instead of the spirit of heaviness; he can eat his meat "with gladness and singleness of heart." But Saul of Tarsus sat in darkness and the shadow of death all through those sad days that followed his conviction, and it was witnessed of him, "Behold he prayeth." The time for praise was not yet.

To this convicted and repentant man Ananias delivers the message, "Arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins, calling upon the name of the Lord." Here we observe that no mention is made of faith; and again I say the omission would seem an extraordinary one, if faith and Baptism were distinct, but co-ordinate, conditions of regeneration. How came it to pass that the great teacher of faith was taught, at the moment of his regeneration, nothing about that faith which he himself was so forcibly to teach to others? The answer, as it seems to me, is best given in his own words—"Having been buried with Him in Baptism, wherein ye were also raised with Him, through faith in the working (τῆς ἐνεργείας) of God."

This appears to me to be the key passage to the whole controversy; the ordinance is effectual in producing its proper spiritual results just in so far as it is the expression of faith in that divine in-working, by which the change is to be wrought. In other words, in the very act of submitting to the sacrament, I claim that God shall work in me the

special benefit witnessed to by the sacrament; and, inasmuch as God must needs honour His own pledge, I find in it also an assurance that the benefit is mine, if indeed my claim be sincere. I conclude then that St. Paul himself went down into the waters of Baptism an unregenerate man, but, invoking the name of the Lord, and claiming in and through the ordinance the washing away of his sins, he rose from the water a pardoned man and a new creature in Christ Jesus.

## § 48. The Inference Suggested by the Case of Cornelius

The next illustration of our subject will be found in the case of Cornelius and his friends, and, although here we are not dealing with a specific direction, the import of what is recorded is none the less clear. St. Peter's sermon first sets before these eager seekers after truth the supreme Object on which saving faith must ever rest, the crucified and risen Saviour, and then he applies his discourse in the words, "To Him give all the Prophets witness that, through His name, whosoever believeth on Him receiveth" (for surely this is the Second Aorist Infinitive, not the rarely used Second Future) "remission of sins."

The words were not an exhortation to believe, no such invitation was needed, but they were an indication of what is necessary for the reception of pardon; and no sooner were they uttered than these ripe and ready souls acted upon them, and in a moment, without any use of the sacrament of

Baptism at all, the Holy Ghost descended on them, with such sensible manifestation of His presence, as left no doubt on the Apostle's mind that these believers were born of the Holy Ghost. Then because Christ had already Himself baptized them with the Holy Ghost and with fire (Acts xi. 16), and because they were thus born again of the Spirit, St. Peter feels that he is justified in ordering some of those who accompanied him to administer the rite of Baptism.

We may observe in passing that it is certainly worthy of notice that he does not seem to have administered the ordinance himself. One can hardly help putting this circumstance side by side with St. Paul's somewhat surprising words, "For God sent me not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel." Is this the view of the *relative* importance of things that would be taken by "Sacerdotalists" to-day? But this by the way.

### § 49. This Case must be Fatal to the First of the Two Theories, unless it was Exceptional. Was it Exceptional?

This one case would be fatal to the theory, which I have called *the first*, this, namely, that regeneration is contingent upon compliance with two distinct conditions (for here the benefit was received when only one of the two had been fulfilled), were it not that the case is supposed to have been a very exceptional one. It is pleaded by those who see that such an incident, if unexplained, must confute the whole of that particular sacramental system which they have

been at such pains to erect, that this exceptional and extraordinary action on the part of the Holy Ghost was due to the unique circumstances of the case.

The door of faith had to be opened to the Gentiles, and it was necessary that the strong conservative and exclusive prejudices of St. Peter, and those who accompanied him, should be overpowered by the demonstration of the Holy Spirit, and that thus the door of the Christian Church should be thrown open to the Gentiles.

There may be enough plausibility in this argument to prevent this incident from being as absolutely conclusive, as it otherwise must have been, in determining the true place of the sacrament in the process of regeneration. But such considerations, it must be remembered, tell both ways. If this was an occasion of singular importance, it would have seemed the more desirable that everything about it should be *strictly normal*.

God in His Providence had already mastered prejudices, and swept away difficulties by supernatural manifestations, could He not with equal ease have disposed the mind of Simon Peter to administer the sacrament to a Gentile, even as He had already disposed the mind of Philip to administer it to the Eunuch, of whom we have no right to conclude that he was a professed proselyte? Had not the same Apostle himself administered Baptism, or seen it administered, to the Samaritans, and were not these deemed further from God in the estimation of the Jews than even the Gentiles?

It surely was not necessary that God should depart from His ordinary method of procedure in order to induce St. Peter to baptize these believers. But if the object of the sacrament is to concentrate faith on the specific provision of Redemption, God would surely teach us, by this incident, that when faith is so concentrated, without the ordinance, there and then, His eternal faithfulness binds Him to communicate the new life, of which subsequently the ordinance becomes the seal and pledge, to assure us of our possession of it.

### § 50. The Light that this Incident, Explained in accordance with the Second Theory, sheds on Cases in our own day

If this be the true explanation of the incident, what a flood of light it throws upon the case of so many amongst ourselves to-day, who show all the signs of the presence of the new life, long before they are baptized, and who, indeed, as in the case of modern converts from heathenism, are baptized subsequently, just because they give such clear proof of having been spiritually born again. And further, how fully it enables us to understand why it is that the fruits of the new life are often so conspicuously displayed by Quakers and other sectaries, who do not submit to the ordinance of Baptism at all.

The incident does not imply that Baptism is superfluous and therefore unnecessary in such cases; for the action of St. Peter teaches exactly the opposite of this. We need the witness of the water, as well as

of the Spirit and of the blood, and the *wilfully* disobedient rejection of what God has appointed to be a pledge, where it is not a means, must grieve the Spirit and lead to the forfeiture of every spiritual blessing.

Besides this, we have to bear in mind the importance of the open confession involved in the ordinance, and also its relation to our introduction into the outward Church. All that the incident seems to teach is that *we must needs be wrong in thinking that God has made the regeneration of the human heart contingent upon two distinct and co-ordinate conditions;* if He had, surely He would not have departed from His own divine method on this or any other occasion.

### § 51. The Cases of the Believers at Antioch, in Pisidia, and of Lydia

A similar illustration is provided in the preaching of St. Paul at Antioch in Pisidia. It will be remembered that he concludes his sermon there with the words, "Be it known unto you, men and brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins, and by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." Here is no reference to Baptism at all, nor do we read that any such reference occurred in his address on the following Sabbath. Nor do we hear of any one being baptized. Yet we read of certain who are described as "ordained to eternal life," who believed. And we further read of the conversations with those who did believe, in

which the Apostolic messengers urged them "to continue in the grace of God."

Indeed, the case may be put more strongly. A sermon is preached and an "after-meeting" is held; no sort of opportunity occurring for the administration of Baptism; yet ere St. Paul parts with those who have been thus "suddenly converted," he exhorts them to continue in the grace of God. From this we infallibly conclude that they had already received the divine grace, which bringeth salvation to all men, although they were not yet baptized. But how could this be, if Baptism is one of two co-ordinate conditions of the reception of that grace? Was this also exceptional?

Not much need be said about the case of Lydia. There is no specific mention of faith in her case, though she is spoken of as having her heart opened "to give heed unto the things that were spoken of Paul." But there is a distinct mention of her Baptism, the inference being at least suggested that this was the full expression of her faith in Christ, and it is perhaps worthy of notice that, immediately after this, she is described as referring to herself as "faithful" ("πιστὴν"), the very word which at the beginning of the same chapter is used of the believing mother of Timothy.

### § 52. The Case of the Jailor of Philippi

A more instructive incident for our present inquiry immediately follows. The terrified and awakened jailor of Philippi, convinced alike by the midnight

songs of his victims, and by the earthquake, and its apparently supernatural effects, reached the conclusion that the testimony of the damsel possessed with the spirit of divination was right after all, and that these men *were* the servants of the most high God, come to show the way of salvation. Rescued from a suicidal death by the intervention of those whom he had used so ill, in a frenzy of alarm, and an agony of conviction, he asks the question, "What must I do to be saved?" And he receives the simple unequivocal answer, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

Here we observe that, just as on the day of Pentecost those who asked a similar question were told to repent and be baptized, no mention of faith being recorded in that primary direction, so conversely on this occasion the inquirer is told to believe, no mention being made of Baptism in this primary direction. On both occasions, if regeneration is dependent upon two co-ordinate conditions, the direction was singularly incomplete, even to the point of being misleading; but on both occasions it was both intelligible and sufficient, on the hypothesis that the ordinance is the appointed expression of the faith.

His illustrious prisoners took good care to instruct the jailor about Baptism, just as, no doubt, St. Peter and his helpers, on the former occasion, took care to instruct their converts about faith; but that does not alter the fact that in each of these two notable cases a palpably defective, and therefore misleading, answer was returned to all-important inquiries, if

*the first* of the two theories be the right one; inasmuch as only one condition was mentioned in each case, when really the benefit is contingent on two.

### § 53. The Case of the Disciples at Ephesus

The half-enlightened men whom St. Paul met at Ephesus furnish another example. Here both faith and Christian baptism are mentioned. St. John, they are reminded, taught not only repentance, but faith in Christ. Doubtless St. Paul would explain to them, as he has to us, the meaning of the ordinance, and its relations to the Atonement. Hence their Baptism would be the sacramental expression of their completer faith. They were baptized into the name of Christ, and then received that complement of Baptism, "the laying on of hands"; with the result, that the Holy Spirit, falling upon them, proved their regeneration complete.

### § 54. The Inference Suggested by the Case of Simon Magus

One other case, as sad and unreal as the rest have been hopeful and genuine, remains to be considered. Simon Magus was baptized, and that on a profession of faith, but was he ever regenerate? St. Peter says that he had "neither part or lot in the matter"; but that his heart was not right with God; that he was still "in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity." Surely if this were true of him only a few days after his professed conversion,

he could never have been a regenerate man—a new creature in Christ Jesus. The sorrowful incident is specially instructive as showing that something more than the ordinance of Baptism, and something more than a faith of the head, accompanying that ordinance, is necessary for a true regeneration.

What was wanting, no doubt, was just that which Baptism is specially designed to induce, *i.e.*, a specific faith in the divine provision to which the ordinance bears its symbolic witness. The word "believe" is necessarily ambiguous. It may be used of mental conviction, it may be used of specific moral trust. It is, no doubt, in the first of these two senses that Simon is said to have believed; but had he exercised moral faith in the operation of God, at his Baptism, surely he must have been so far changed, as that it would have been impossible for him to think of purchasing the power of the Holy Ghost for money.

His case is the complement of that of Cornelius. This last shows us that a true and spiritual regeneration may occur where faith has been concentrated on Christ's redeeming work, even without the assistance of the ordinance designed to induce this concentration. The case of Simon Magus, on the other hand, teaches us that it is possible to submit to the ordinance, without employing it for the purpose for which it was instituted, and that in such a case spiritual regeneration can never ensue. We will consider the teaching of the Epistles in the next chapter.

# CHAPTER VI

## THE CONDITIONS OF REGENERATION, AS WITNESSED TO IN THE EPISTLES

### § 55. The Inference to be Drawn from the Teaching of the Epistles on the Subject of the Conditions of Regeneration

We have seen that in the book of "The Acts" regeneration is represented as dependent sometimes on Baptism, sometimes on faith, and I have suggested that the only reasonable explanation of this phenomenon is, that the outward sacrament must ever have been regarded as the normal expression of the inward faith.

When we turn from the Acts to the Epistles, we find ourselves still face to face with the same class of phenomena. One great change, and only one, is recognised throughout, but sometimes this is attributed to faith, without any reference to Baptism, sometimes to Baptism without any reference to faith.

It is perhaps a significant fact that the word Baptism is only used four times, or with the passage in Hebrews, where a different form is employed, five times in these Epistles; and the cognate verb is only used four times in connection with doctrinal teach-

ing. Certainly this is not what we should expect, if faith and Baptism are co-ordinate conditions of regeneration. Surely we cannot altogether ignore the contrast between this slender reference to the ordinance of regeneration, and the repeated references to faith, as the condition of justification and salvation, which is characteristic, at any rate, of the Epistles of St. Paul. Such a discrepancy is clearly much more easily explained on the *second* than on the *first* of our hypotheses; for, if the object of the ordinance is to concentrate faith on a specific object, and to express it, when so concentrated, it is not surprising that much more should be said about the faith, that the ordinance is designed to assist, than of this provision for its assistance.

I cannot, indeed, forbear remarking that St. Paul must pose as a very bad Churchman, and an indifferent "Catholic," measured by the standard of those who rejoice in being strong Churchmen and good Catholics to-day. He wrote thirteen Epistles, and is sometimes credited with a fourteenth; but in these he only refers to Baptism by name in his doctrinal teaching some seven or eight times, and to the Eucharist he only refers in one Epistle out of the thirteen, and in that only incidentally in two short passages. How is this? Would any modern Ritualist be capable of such a procedure? Surely there must be some discrepancy between the estimate of the great Apostle, of the place of the sacraments in the Christian scheme, and that of some of those who profess to be guided by his teaching!

## § 56. Consideration of the Passages in St. Paul's Epistles that Treat of Baptism

But, to return from this digression, let us take first these few passages about Baptism, and endeavour to discover how they stand related to the ampler teaching on the subject of faith that abounds in these letters.

In the Epistle to the Romans St. Paul discusses, in the sixth chapter, a not unnatural objection to the doctrine of justification—this, namely, that it seems to attach a premium to sin. "Shall we," he asks, "continue in sin that grace may abound?" In his answer he refers to the fact that we were baptized into Christ's death, and buried in His tomb, that we might walk in newness of life. This passage is absolutely parallel with one that I have already quoted from the Epistle to the Colossians; so that if, in the latter, faith in the operation of God is the condition of this mystic burial and resurrection, there is no escape from the conclusion that the same is understood in this passage in Romans also.

But, in addition to this, we find precisely the same form of thought occurring in Galatians (ii. 17, &c.). He is dealing there with what is practically the same objection to his doctrine of justification. "If," he says, "I build up again those things which I destroyed, I prove myself a transgressor. For I through the law died to the law that I might live unto God. I have been crucified with Christ, yet I live; and yet no longer I but Christ liveth in me, and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith

which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself up for me" (Gal. ii. 18–20, R.V.).

Here no reference is made to Baptism, while without naming faith, as directed towards the Cross, the Apostle is evidently expressing its operation, when concentrated upon the provision made for our justification by redemption. Yet, though he does not refer to Baptism, our knowledge of what he says elsewhere forbids us to doubt that he had the moment of his Baptism before his mind's eye when he said these words; for it would be precisely in the act of submitting to that sacrament that he would regard himself as through the law dying to the law.

It is the teaching of the sixth of Romans over again, with just this difference, that, whereas there he specifies Baptism, without mentioning faith, as the condition of benefiting by Redemption, here he enunciates the faith, without any reference to Baptism. The only reasonable inference from such phenomena must surely be that *the sacrament was the expression of the faith.*

## § 57. That the same Phenomena mark his Teaching with respect to our Spiritual Sonship

Let us observe how the same habit of procedure is illustrated in yet another passage, where another aspect of the results of redemption is being discussed. In the third chapter of the same Epistle we find St. Paul saying, "Ye are all sons of God, through faith in Christ Jesus." This is a clear, definite, and precise statement, complete in itself; and here no

mention is made of Baptism, as the means whereby this divine sonship is imparted. No honest exegesis can escape from the conclusion bound up in these words that faith in Christ constitutes us sons of God. But what follows in the very next sentence? "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ;" the inference being that, by being thus clothed in Christ, spiritually united to Christ, these Christians became sons of God. Yet he has just said that they became sons of God by faith. Which statement is correct? *Both are correct*, but they can only be so because the sacrament was the normal and ideal expression of the faith.

I submit that St. Paul could not have thus expressed himself if he had thought of Baptism and faith as two distinct and co-ordinate conditions of adoption into the family of God. Could he have helped using some such expression as this, if he had held that view, "Ye are all children of God, by faith and by baptism." Even had he used such a phrase, it would have been capable of being interpreted in the sense that I claim for his words, without any violence being done to his language. But such a sense cannot be imported into his actual words, as they stand, without great violence being done to their obvious meaning. His first statement must, in that case, be admitted to be so incomplete as to be positively misleading, inasmuch as he there definitely attributes a certain specific result to a single cause, whereas it can really be induced only by two distinct and co-ordinate causes.

## § 58. The Same Feature is Exhibited in St. Paul's Teaching on the Subject of Present Salvation

Let us consider yet another example of the same thing, and this time a particularly important one. St. Paul held very strongly what, I am afraid, I must sorrowfully admit, a great many of my fellow-churchmen do not hold at all, *i.e.*, the doctrine of present salvation. He nowhere states this more clearly than in the 2nd Chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, where he says twice over, "By grace ye are saved." On the second occasion of his using these strong words he adds that this salvation is through faith, and not of works, and he makes no mention of Baptism.

In the Epistle to Titus, on the other hand, in a passage that we have already considered, he uses these words, "Not by works done in righteousness which we did ourselves, but according to His mercy He saved us through the laver of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost." It is true that the application of these words to Baptism has been disputed, but I confess it seems to me surprising that it should have been. I should be still more surprised to find that any writer of the early Church disputed this application of the words.

But here we have only another illustration of the point that I am enforcing. In the one place St. Paul represents present salvation as conditioned on faith, in the other upon Baptism (if that be the right interpretation to put upon the words). Surely in

each case his statement is so incomplete as to be mischievously misleading, if there are two co-ordinate conditions on which the benefit of salvation depends.

In that case a convert who read only the Epistle to the Ephesians would have been warranted in concluding that salvation came only by faith, while one who only chanced to see the Epistle to Titus might, with equal justification, have concluded that salvation is only dependent on Baptism. But if he viewed Baptism, as I contend he did, as the sacramental expression of faith, nothing at all misleading or surprising is to be found in the fact that sometimes he speaks of the inner moral attitude, and sometimes of the outward religious act, in which it found expression.

### § 59. The same Feature is Exhibited in St. Paul's Teaching on the Subject of Justification

Let us give just one example more, which is suggested by the words immediately following those that I have just quoted. He proceeds to say, it will be remembered, directly after this reference to the laver of regeneration, "that being justified by His grace, we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." Here justification seems to be represented as dependent upon this washing of regeneration, which I may, I think, say all the best commentators regard as only another word for Baptism. But, side by side with this, we will place the most important statement on the subject of justification to be found in his Epistles, "Being justified

by faith we have peace with God," which has no reference in it to Baptism. Surely on justification, a subject so peculiarly his own, St. Paul will be carefully accurate in laying down the conditions clearly, which to him were a matter of special revelation. Yet here again we meet with the same characteristic feature in his teaching. In the one place he refers to Baptism as the means of bringing about justification, without any mention of faith, while in the other case he insists upon faith, without any sort of reference to Baptism. There is only one explanation.

### § 60. That there is no Escape from the Conclusion that there is but One Condition of Regeneration

I trust that this review of the teaching of the Acts and of the Epistles will leave as little doubt on the mind of the candid reader, as is left on my own, as to the true and scriptural relation of Baptism to faith, the *one* appointed condition of that *one* great change, which we may call either Regeneration or Justification or Conversion, according to the particular aspect of it that we are contemplating.

I see no possible escape from the conclusion, if we are to be guided by the principles of sound reason, that these are not to be regarded as two distinct and co-ordinate conditions, but as two elements in the one necessary condition, Baptism being the outward sacramental expression of an inward moral attitude towards God revealed in Christ, dependent upon, and

having special reference to, the great work of Redemption wrought out on the Cross. If this be the true view of the case, the Sacrament will no longer be regarded as a sort of metaphysical medium through which some mysterious gift is conveyed, but as an ordained means, specially designed to focus the diffused potentialities of our faith upon a definite issue; to witness to the divine provision, and assure us of its application to our own case.

### § 61. That such a View is in Harmony with the Philosophy of the Christian Religion

And surely such a view of the case is in harmony with all that we know of the philosophy of the Christian religion. Its object is not to erect a medium of communication between us and God, a ceremonial system through which His personal influence may reach us, as the electric current reaches us through a wire, or as the water from the reservoir reaches our house through a pipe. Direct spiritual contact between the human spirit and the Spirit God is the crowning glory of all true Christian experience; and therefore the object of the sacramental system must be to encourage this, not to substitute something else for it. If so much depends on a very definite and specific act of faith, surely it is just what we might expect, that God in His divine wisdom should adopt special means, in order to emphasise the necessity of this, and to afford our faith a suitable mode of expressing itself. And this is exactly what the sacrament does.

### § 62. That this is to Honour, not to Degrade the Sacrament

To affirm this is not to dishonour the sacraments, but to give them their exalted place in the Christian system, as ministering to the highest Christian experience and attainment. We do not honour the sacraments when we regard them as a kind of spiritual machinery, possessing certain mysterious and quasi-magical properties of their own. Nay, it is evident that no ordinance can have a higher function than to minister to the apprehension of a direct spiritual gift, bestowed by the hand of God.

In no case can the ordinance *be* the gift. The only question is, Has God deposited the gift in the ordinance so that the ordinance directly communicates it, or does God directly Himself communicate it, when we use the ordinance, as the expression of our faith in Him, believing that He has thus bound Himself, as by a pledge, to impart the benefit to which the symbolism of the ordinance bears witness.

So far from exalting the ordinance by assigning to it an efficacy analogous to that which is supposed to attach to a magical charm, it seems to me that we must inevitably degrade it. When, for instance, the Editor of the *Church Times* affirms that even a sacrilegious Baptism imparts the germ of a new and divine life to the profane recipient, one cannot but feel that this germ must be a thing of very small practical value and utility. What a different and

much more exalted thing the ordinance becomes when it is the expression of the intense and concentrated faith of an awakened soul, the solemn act of fealty in which the human spirit becomes possessed of its divine inheritance.

### § 63. That the Quasi-magical Theory of the Sacrament does Degrade it

What a meagre and inappreciable benefit regeneration must be, if all the baptized are regenerated, inasmuch as in the vast majority of cases it produces absolutely no moral or spiritual effect that can be discovered by the most careful examination. We have thousands of unbaptized in these days growing up side by side with the baptized. Can we observe any single respect in which unspiritual Church children are better than unspiritual children of Baptist parentage? In America, where the Baptists constitute one of the largest religious bodies, the opportunity for observation on this point is even larger; has any contrast in favour of the actual moral and spiritual condition of the baptized as compared with the unbaptized been noticed there? The truth is, as soon as we have committed ourselves to this theory, we feel ourselves to be moving in the region of theological figments; and the ordinance is degraded into the vehicle of a blessing, that has nothing to answer to it in human experience. A merely theoretic blessing is practically no blessing at all.

### § 64. How the Mechanical Theory of Regeneration Presents itself to the Intelligent and Spiritual Nonconformist

Think of what such a theory seems like to the intelligent and spiritually-minded Nonconformist, who has had a very distinct experience of a conversion that has transformed his whole life. He justly reasons that regeneration, or the new birth, must be the greatest change that a human being can undergo; there can be no greater inward transformation than that change which deserves to be called a new birth, and constitutes him who is its subject a new creature. He knows that such a change did take place at the moment of his conversion, when first he trusted his soul into the hands of his Saviour, and claimed believingly from Him the gift of everlasting life. But how does he feel when he hears a curate, fresh from a Ritualistic Seminary, tell him that this great change, which revolutionised his whole career, and transformed his character, was not regeneration; but that he was regenerated by (perhaps) a late Baptism which occurred when he was eight years old, and which possibly he can perfectly remember; as well as the fact that he remained in all moral and religious respects exactly the same after it as he was before.

Is it amazing that such a man should regard the clergyman, who tells him anything so preposterous, as no better than a religious charlatan, and denounce him from the chapel pulpit the next Sunday evening

as a blind leader of the blind; while he declaims, with all the fervour of intense conviction, on the words, "Ye must be born again!" Is this the way to induce appreciation of the sacramental system of our Church, or of our Church itself, amongst the earnest and the spiritually-minded?

It cannot be denied that multitudes of those who deserve to be so described are lost to the Church year by year, by the advocacy of this mechanical system; and these are just the people that the Church can least afford to lose. It is just such Christian folk as these that ought to be the strength of the Church; and indeed they always prove to be so, when they are not alienated by unspiritual teaching.

It is worth while to notice too, that not a few good and earnest men are being set against the custom of Infant Baptism altogether by this sort of teaching, and are beginning to regard it as lying at the root of that entire mechanical system, which their souls abhor. Plymouth Brethren and Anabaptists have no more serviceable allies in the promulgation of views, which all loyal Churchmen must regard with the liveliest disfavour, than these advocates of the Sacerdotal theory of necessary and universal regeneration in the act of Baptism.

# CHAPTER VII

## INFANT BAPTISM, CONSIDERED IN THE LIGHT OF THESE CONCLUSIONS

### § 65. Is this View of the Sacrament Necessarily Opposed to the Practice of Infant Baptism?

It may occur to some of my readers, who have carefully followed the argument of the foregoing pages, to object, that the position I have taken with regard to this sacrament is absolutely fatal to the usage of Infant Baptism, and that, as this has been the practice of the Church from primitive antiquity, we must either believe that the Church has always, or nearly always, been in error here, or else abandon the theory that I have advanced with respect to this ordinance. The objection is a very reasonable one, and I will endeavour to face it without any kind of evasion.

### § 66. A Résumé of the Conclusions we have Arrived at

Let me first state succinctly the conclusions at which, in the case of the adult, we have arrived. *First*—We affirm that one great change, and only one, is necessary in the case of fallen man, as the

condition of his entering the kingdom of heaven; and that this one change is *regeneration*.

*Second*.—That this change is, on God's side, conditioned on redemption, by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

*Third*.—That this change is conditioned, on our side, on faith in that redeeming work, and in the Person of the Redeemer; *of which faith* Baptism, symbolising as it does our death, burial, and resurrection together with Christ, is the divinely-appointed sacramental *expression*.

*Fourth*.—That, in strictly normal cases, the ordinance being specially designed to concentrate faith on that to which its symbolism bears witness, the moment of submission to it will be the moment of the reception of the spiritual benefit; But—

*Fifth*.—That in cases where the ordinance (as in the instance of Simon Magus) is received without spiritual apprehension of the benefit of regeneration, this must be realised, if at all, at some later point in the man's experience; when at length faith is exercised in the operation of God.

*Sixth*.—That in other cases, owing to the concentration of faith, without the help of the ordinance, on the divine provision, regeneration takes place before the ordinance is administered. So it was with Cornelius and his friends, and so it is to-day, for the most part, in missionary work. In such instances the ordinance is (1) A public profession of faith in the redeeming work of Christ; (2) A confession of Christ before men, and a taking of His vows upon

us; (3) A sacramental seal of a blessing already realised, enabling us to realise it all the more fully; (4) A pledge to assure us that the benefits of redemption are ours; (5) A means of admitting the recipient into the fellowship of the outward Church.

*Seventh.*—That, therefore, while the ordinance is designed to be the sacramental expression of our faith, faith can be, and in some cases is, exercised without it; in which cases the ordinance does not cease to be necessary and valuable, but answers a purpose distinct from that which it normally subserves.

### § 67. It is evident that the Inward Faith is capable of Expressing Itself otherwise than in the Sacrament

The outward ordinance and the inward faith, on which regeneration depends, are not then so bound together, as that the one is absolutely indispensable to the other. Probably most Christian people believe that, on the whole, we are wise in insisting on signs of the inward and spiritual change in our converts from heathenism, before we admit them outwardly into the fellowship of Christ's religion. But if it be lawful thus to dissociate, as to time, the inward change from the outward ordinance, claiming that the one shall have occurred before the other is permitted, it must be equally lawful, if there be good reason for doing so, to concede the ordinance where the inward faith is not yet possible, as in the case of infants.

### § 68. What is Implied in our Persuasion of the Safety of those who Die in Infancy

The question is, Are there such good reasons? In reply I would point out that we all, whether Church people or Baptists, believe in a special economy of grace for our little ones, provisional in its character, and designed to secure their salvation should they die in infancy. Now, on what do we base our confidence for this result? Is it on the original innocency of the child, or on the redeeming work wrought out by Christ for all? Surely there can be but one answer. The innocence of the infant cannot entitle it to so great a thing as everlasting life. We may dismiss with horror the idea that some theologians have not hesitated to advance, that there may be "infants of a span long in hell." But while we do not attempt to decide how God might have dealt with such apart from redemption, we cannot admit that their mere innocence can entitle them to all the immeasurable glories of everlasting life.

### § 69. That there is a Provisional Economy of Grace for our Little Ones, and that this rests on Redemption and Regeneration

What then? Surely we believe that we owe our hope for our little ones to the redeeming work of Christ. But if this be so, it must be by a process of regeneration, springing from redemption, that

they are saved. For it must be by the gift of a new and eternal life, and such a gift is the very essence of regeneration. If, then, we have to believe in a provisional economy of divine grace for our little ones, by virtue of which those who die in infancy are regenerated through redemption, and thus saved; why should we arbitrarily suppose that this provisional economy of grace is confined to those only who are "appointed to die"? Do infants not need a provisional economy of divine grace, specially adjusted to their capacities, *for the first developments of their responsibility*, at least as much as they would require such a provision, if called to die? If our hopes for them in case of their death are founded on redemption, on what else can our hopes be founded for their proper Christian development, if they live?

### § 70. That the Grace of the New Life is needed for those who Live, as well as for those who Die

Is it, can it be, necessary, that our little ones, at the earliest dawn of their intelligent and responsible existence, should have, as it were, to serve their apprenticeship to the devil, until, when they are of full age to understand what it means, a conversion of their hearts to God lifts their life to the right plane. All through those early years of incipient development we continue to trust to the benefit of redemption for them in case they die; why, in the name of common consistency, should we not trust in redemption equally for them in case they live? We

have already shown that such confidence on our part for those that die, either in infancy or in early years, involves the admission that God must impart to such, through Christ, the gift of a new and everlasting life, which is the essential feature of spiritual regeneration; but why should He impart this only to those that have to die? Do not the living require it too?

### § 71. If our Hope for such is Based on Regeneration, why not Admit them to the Sacrament of Regeneration?

But, if all our hopes for our little ones, as such, whether they live or die, are based upon redemption, and upon the application of its benefits to them by the provisional gift to them of the new life, which is the essential element in spiritual regeneration, why should we not bring our little ones to Him, in the ordinance which bears witness at once to the fact of redemption, and to our need of the new life and of that regenerative act, by which the new life is introduced?

Our Lord's blessing of the little ones warrants us in claiming it of Him that he shall bless ours; but no blessing that Christ gives can be merely formal, it must carry with it some appropriate spiritual benefit; for it is the very idea of a blessing that it is a giving on God's side to His creatures just what is most necessary for them. Can those whom we believingly present to Him for His blessing remain under the primal curse? Can those be holy (as the

Apostle tells us that the children of Christians are) who are destitute of all vital contact with the Sanctifier?

When the bearers of the paralytic brought their charge to Jesus, we are told that "seeing *their* faith" Jesus exclaimed, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee." Surely when Christian parents bring their child to Christ, and believingly ask that, in the very ordinance of regeneration, their little one may be regenerated, that is to say, may be received *provisionally* into such vital relations with our blessed Lord, that, whether it lives or whether it dies, His life may be in it, they are asking no more than God can consistently grant. The more so as we all believe that He does grant this very thing in the case of those who die in infancy.

## § 72. The Hypothetical Character of our Baptismal Service

Our Baptismal service is constructed on the hypothesis, that it is to be the expression of this claim on the part of believing parents and god-parents. It is not contemplated that the service shall be a mere perfunctory and quasi-mechanical operation, in which a vast spiritual change is produced by the recital of a formula and the use of a form; but it is intended to be an expression of earnest and heartfelt faith on the part of those who bring the child to the font. "Doubt ye not therefore," exclaims the administrant, "but earnestly believe that He will like-

wise favourably receive this present infant, . . . that He will give him the blessing of everlasting life," &c.

I will not pursue this part of my subject further, nor endeavour to prove more fully that this hypothesis runs all through the Baptismal service, because this part of the case has been presented, far more ably than I can hope to present it, in a work, that should be read by all who are interested in this subject. The unanswered and unanswerable treatises of the late Professor Mozley on the Gorham controversy, and on this subject generally, can, in my judgment, leave no doubt in any candid mind, as to the hypothetical character of the strong statements in our Baptismal Office.*

### § 73. That we cannot Dogmatise about Results where the Hypothesis is not Realised

Where the assumption that pervades the Baptismal Office is not realised, and no believing prayer accompanies the ordinance, we are not in a position to dogmatise about direct spiritual results. Where neither a revelation, nor grounds for a trustworthy inference, exist, we must be content with "pious opinions." And, while we affirm *that Christ has never attached the promise of spiritual results to the perfunctory performance of a quasi-mechanical act*, we will not forget that Christ loves the little ones still.

* See "A Review of the Baptismal Controversy," by the late Canon Mozley (Longmans, London); and also "The Primitive Doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration," by the same Author (John Murray); now unfortunately out of print.

And there, perhaps, we had better leave a question which, in the light of the conclusions which we have already reached, is of theoretical, rather than practical, interest.

It is more to the purpose to reflect that, even in such cases, our young people gain by having been received into the outward Church, heirs of a rich birthright of Christian privilege. And, if our population is to-day nominally Christian, instead of being avowedly infidel, or non-christian, surely this is no small advantage; and we owe it more to the custom of Pædo-baptism than to any other single cause.

### § 74. Argument from the Uncertainty of Childish Experiences

There is yet another consideration that should weigh with us in favour of Infant Baptism. Were we to defer the Baptism of our little ones until their exercise of faith in Christ, we should have to put ourselves in the delicate position of having to pronounce sentence upon the reality and sincerity of the faith of children of very tender years. If a child only just emerging from infancy really desires to express faith in Christ, we ought to baptize it; but who shall undertake the invidious task of deciding which of several children in the nursery is thus fit to be baptized. It cannot be wise to encourage on the part of very young children such definite statements about their spiritual condition and experience as may be called for in the case of adults; and yet it is equally undesirable that our little ones should not

be taught that they belong to God, and that God belongs to them. Surely if they wish to believe in Christ they have as much right to the sacrament of regeneration as the adult has; and yet it would be in most cases impossible to make sure either of their intelligence or of their earnestness.

But if it be unwise to encourage religious precocity by an early administration of the ordinance on the recipient's own responsibility, and yet inexpedient to defer it through all the years of early life, one is forced back upon the conclusion, that the wise, and indeed the only way out of the difficulty, lies in the administration of the rite, upon the responsibility of those who, like the "mothers of Salem," desire a blessing from Christ for their children.

### § 75. The Validity of such Baptism, "Affusion" Defended

As to the validity of such a Baptism, surely it cannot be reasonably disputed on the mere ground of the outward form of administration that climatic considerations have rendered *usual*, but not universal, amongst us. The symbolic act equally signifies burial, whether immersion or affusion is employed. The throwing of earth on the coffin is even more suggestive to our minds of burial than the lowering of a coffin into the grave.

That the word at least includes the idea of affusion is sufficiently evident from our Lord's use of the term in reference to the Pentecostal Baptism. Those

who were the recipients of that blessing were not plunged in a laver of spiritual fire, but they were baptized by its affusion; the tongues of fire rested on them. It is instructive to notice that in that early treatise—the "Didache," or Teaching of the Twelve Apostles—which has been so recently discovered, and which is supposed to date from the end of the first, or the beginning of the second century, affusion is distinctly recognised as a valid method, though not the most desirable method, of administering the rite. This surely leaves no room for doubt as to the convictions of the primitive Church on this subject; and ought, it seems to me, to close this discussion.

### § 76. Inconsistency of Baptists in Denying the Validity of Infant Baptism

But, passing to what is more important, let me point out that our Anabaptist friends put themselves in a very anomalous position when they object to the validity of Infant Baptism, not on this merely technical ground, as one might call it, but rather because infants do not, and cannot, exercise saving faith in Christ. For those amongst them who recognise the distinction between true heart-felt faith and mere cold intellectual credence must admit, that not a few of those who are baptized in riper years, even in their own communion, are baptized with only the faith of the head, and not with that of the heart. They are therefore baptized while remaining in a spiritually unregenerate condi-

tion. Yet Baptists never propose to re-baptize such, while they do insist on re-baptizing those who were not living in conscious sin at all at the time of their Baptism as infants. The Baptism of a full-grown hypocrite, which is an act of impiety, is so far valid that the ordinance is not to be repeated, whereas the Baptism of an innocent child, presented to God with the earnest believing prayers of pious parents and sponsors, is invalid, and the act requires to be repeated. Is this a reasonable or consistent conclusion?

I would point out, too, that while Baptists strongly affirm that we have no Scriptural authority for Infant Baptism, which is a statement that can only be accepted with certain very serious modifications, we Churchmen may boldly affirm that they themselves have absolutely no New Testament authority for that form of "believers' Baptism," on which they so much insist.

For they do not teach, as the New Testament does teach, that Baptism is designed to be the expression of a saving faith, so that in the act of Baptism regeneration is to be realised. So far from this, it is their habit to administer the ordinance, after a period of probation, to those who have given sufficient evidence of their having been already, for some considerable time, regenerated, a practice for which, be it right, or be it wrong, no single Scriptural precedent can be even alleged. Herein our Baptist friends follow tradition, not Scripture, as much as they accuse the Pædo-baptist of doing.

## CHAPTER VIII

### REGENERATION OF INFANTS, PROVISIONAL OR ABSOLUTE?

### § 77. We have a Right to Expect that our believing Prayers for our Infants at Baptism are answered

I DEVOTED the last chapter to the consideration of the expediency and validity of Infant Baptism, feeling that it was necessary for me to show my fellow-Churchmen, if this could be shown, that the position that I have advanced is not inconsistent with that practice of bringing our little ones to Christ in His own ordinance, which so many of them, in common with myself, esteem so highly. True, I could wish that, as in the days of St. Augustine, so now, the practice might be left optional, and that the Monicas of the period might feel free to act as Monica did. But, valuing as I do, this custom very highly, both as a parent and as a minister of Christ, it is satisfactory to feel that it is not inconsistent with the view of the place and purpose of this sacred ordinance for which I have been contending.

We have arrived at the conclusion, that, at any rate in cases where this blessing is sought in believing prayer, our little ones do in their Baptism become the

subjects of that provisional economy of grace, which we all feel sure must exist for such, and are, for the time being, that is to say, while they continue incapable of intelligent moral action, secure of eternal life through the great Life-giver. The introduction of such a new life must be regeneration, but this benefit can only be provisional in its character; nor can it be made absolute, until the divinely-appointed condition of faith in the Redeemer is complied with.

### § 78. The Case of those who Claim from the first their Baptismal Birthright

In such instances a childlike faith may be exercised with the dawn of intelligence and the beginnings of responsibility, and in that case what is, to begin with, granted provisionally will be enjoyed absolutely and permanently by its happy possessor in the sunny days of a Christian childhood. Where this happens the young Christian will pass through no spiritual crisis, to which one could give the name of conversion, but will be able to say, as many hundreds of the very best and most spiritual Christians that I have ever known have said to me, "I can never remember a time when I did not love and trust my Saviour." The existence of multitudes of such Christians amongst us (and their number is increasing), is surely a very powerful argument in favour of the practice of Infant Baptism. For it seems to me impossible in such cases to answer the question—If not in infancy, when should such as these have been baptized?

## § 79. The Case of those who Fail to Fulfil the Baptismal Condition

But supposing, on the other hand, no such childlike exercise of faith occurs, and the terms of the covenant of redemption, on man's side, are never complied with, what will be the spiritual condition of the baptized in that case? The teaching of those who hold, what I have called, the mechanical theory of regeneration, would be that baptismal grace, so far as it carries with it the salvation of the soul, may be forfeited by wilful and mortal sin, although the "germ of the new life," to use their recognised phrase, remains. But what such fail to see is, that non-compliance with the conditions, on which the benefit of redemption is, by divine ordinance, contingent, in itself involves the forfeiture of a benefit, which is *only provisional* in its character.

One might illustrate this most important point in some such way as this. A feudal nobleman inherits an estate, which is held on condition of doing homage to the reigning prince. Being a minor he is not in a position to offer his homage, but, possibly, this may be done by his guardian or next-of-kin, as his representative, on his behalf. When, however, he reaches the appointed age, this nobleman must either make his homage, or forfeit his property. It is not necessary that he should become a rebel against the king, in order to bring about the loss of his property. All that is needed is, that he

should not fulfil the condition on which his property is held, and at once the estate is escheated to the Crown. The minor's enjoyment of the property was in its legal character *provisional*, not *absolute*.

### § 80. Loss of the Provisional Benefit not Dependent on Mortal Sin

Even so it is not necessary that our baptized children should commit some great sin, or even sin wilfully at all, in order to forfeit the baptismal benefit. If I fail to comply with the conditions of the covenant of redemption, and do not exercise real heart-faith on my Redeemer, I forfeit, *ipso facto*, the benefit, provisional in its character, which as an infant I had enjoyed; and *it never becomes absolute at all*. If that benefit was such an action of God's Spirit upon mine, as induced what deserved to be called a regenerate condition, this will be lost for want of compliance with the appointed conditions, and hence *it is not true to say of such that they are regenerate*.

### § 81. The Danger of the Opposite Theory

It is here, as it seems to me, that we are brought face to face with a very serious danger, that springs from the mechanical theory of baptismal regeneration. Many of our baptized children are respectably brought up, and regularly attend their church; they have a certain outward form of godliness, and probably adhere to the custom of "saying their

prayers" night and morning; but they know nothing of the inward reality of spiritual experience; and although they believe with their heads the truths contained in the Apostles' creed, they know nothing of trusting with their hearts in Christ as their personal Saviour.

Yet such people take refuge in the theory of baptismal regeneration, and indignantly resent any attempt to raise them to a more spiritual experience. They have never directed their eyes to the Cross, nor seen their old man crucified together with Christ; they probably deride the idea of there being such a thing as "present salvation," as a presumption only worthy of members of the Salvation Army; and they know nothing of the experiences of justification, or the inward blessedness of peace with God. Yet are they satisfied that their religion is on a trustworthy basis; for have they not been baptized? And have they not heard from their own clergy, again and again, that all the baptized are regenerate?

Thus we arrive at this extraordinary issue that the very ordinance that has been specially instituted to witness to the necessity of faith, and to give expression to faith, when it is exercised, comes to be perverted into a means of evading this condition of regeneration altogether. Surely if we can believe this to be possible, there is no absurdity or inconsistency so grotesque, as to be beyond our capacity of belief.

## § 82. The Effect of the Mechanical Theory on Preaching

And not only are individuals thus led to be content with a religion, destitute of anything that deserves the name of a lively faith, but, further, this deplorable figment of universal regeneration takes the point and the definite purpose out of the evangelising preaching of those who accept it. It was the recognition of the necessity of the new birth that made the preaching of the old Evangelical fathers so forcible.

> "I must be born again, or die
> To all eternity,"

were the words that Wesley puts into the mouths of those that sing his hymns; and such undoubtedly was his teaching from the pulpit. This was the message of Charles Simeon and of all the leaders of the Evangelical Revival in the last, and in the present, century; and to this more than anything else their wonderful influence was due. And it is this message that, sounding forth with equal clearness in the utterances of the foremost evangelist of our time, has been witnessed to by God, in the gathering in of a vaster harvest of souls, through the great preacher so lately departed from amongst us, D. L. Moody, than has probably been reaped by any other one man in the history of the Christian Church.

But no such message is permitted in the case of the preacher who believes that all alike, whether

they have ever exercised a heartfelt faith or not, have been regenerated in their Baptism. No such preacher can urge upon his nominally Christian flock the declaration which, with a kindly severity, our Lord pressed upon the religious, but unenlightened Nicodemus, "Ye must be born again."

Hence souls that are very much in Nicodemus' condition will find nothing in the deliverances of such preachers to disturb their fatal self-complacency. Strong things may be said about the necessity of conversion, but men of Nicodemus' class will say in their hearts, This is not intended for me, and others like me, but for those who are leading immoral lives. Whereas, in good sooth, people of this type need, more than any other class of persons, to have this very message driven home.

And all this must contribute to induce a formal, and, as I think I am right in calling it, a mechanical, habit of religious life; and this, I solemnly believe, is becoming increasingly prevalent. I do not say, and I have not said, that this mechanical theory of Christianity pervades all the teaching of the more spiritually-minded of the Sacerdotal party; but I cannot shut my eyes to the fact that there are unspiritual, as well as spiritual, Ritualists, and the former class will certainly find, in the mechanical theory of Church ordinances, a substitute for true spirituality, with results that can only be described as fatal both to themselves and those they teach.

### § 83. That we must needs recognise the Tendency of the Unspiritual to Gain on the Spiritual

We all of us know, from sorrowful experience and observation, that the unspiritual element has always a tendency to gain ground on the spiritual, a tendency which can only be counteracted by strong and clear spiritual teaching; but, if our teaching ministers to this tendency, what can be the ultimate result, but a general loss of spirituality; a substitution of the form of godliness for the power? This I take to be about the worst thing that can befall a Church; and, when this state of things has been brought about, the triumph of unbelief and religious negation has already become assured.

### § 84. A Groundless Assumption of a Divine Promise

In concluding this review of the mechanical theory of baptismal regeneration, I ought perhaps to say a word about the assumption on which it rests. It is claimed by those who hold it, that the ordinance brings about regeneration in virtue of a promise, made by Him who instituted it, that it should do so. *When*, *where*, and *how* was this promise made? Our Lord does indeed tell us that we must be born of water and of the Holy Spirit; but where has He said that every one that is born of water must of necessity be also born of the Spirit; or where has

He said that every one who submits to the ordinance of Baptism, whatever his motive, is there and then born of the Spirit.

As for the statements of St. Paul and St. Peter on this subject, I trust that I have already sufficiently shown that they refer to that ordinance, only as being the expression of a living faith; and therefore it would not be true to say of them that they either contain or imply the assertion that God has attached supernatural results to the performance of what may be only a quasi-mechanical act.

This plea, that the mysterious efficacy of the ordinance is due to a divine promise, is, like so many other of the foundations on which this system rests, a mere baseless assumption, which begs the question that is at issue, but will not bear any critical examination. Our Lord has never made any such promise, nor do I hesitate to say that, if He had done so, He would have been attaching a premium to insincerity and unreality; and thus He would have contributed to the defeat of those spiritual purposes, for the sake of which He has made the supremest of all sacrifices.

### § 85. The Argument that Children impose no Barrier Considered

Some of my readers, who feel the full force of my contention with respect to adults, and who are quite ready to abandon the theory of necessary and universal baptismal regeneration, so far as such are

concerned, will yet perhaps be disposed to reply, Is not the case somewhat different when the ordinance is administered to innocent infants? They at least impose no barrier of unforgiven sin between themselves and the regenerating power of the grace of God. Must not our Lord's benediction of the little ones be regarded as a promise that where we follow the example of the Hebrew mothers, and bring our little ones to Christ for blessing, He will bless them still?

I must reply to such by referring them to what I have already said with respect to that provisional economy of grace, which is specially designed to deal with the case of our little ones. But I must remind them that the great spiritual change, of which we are speaking, is dependent, not upon a merely negative, but upon a positive condition; and that it is impossible for us to substitute the former for the latter. The condition of justification, which is nothing else but regeneration, regarded in its judicial aspects, is not that we should abstain from mortal sin, but that we should exercise heart-felt faith in the Saviour; and this condition must be complied with, ere any intelligent person can be entitled to regard himself as regenerate.

### § 86. At what Age does Holy Baptism cease to induce Regeneration?

But I would further press upon the attention of those who thus plead, that, in adopting this position, they throw themselves open to the objection that,

if they are right, regeneration is dependent upon an altogether novel condition, namely *the infantile state* of the recipient. But who shall say where infancy ends and responsibility begins? Children, as we know, may be baptized at any age; if, therefore, their regeneration is dependent on their infant innocence, who shall decide which of ten children baptized in each of the years between one and ten is really regenerated? To which of the ten are we to say "Ye must be born again," and to which "In your case no such new birth is necessary"? Needless to say some children are much more developed at five than others are at eight, how then can we be sure that this condition is complied with, except in the case of infants in arms?

This simple and obvious consideration is really the *reductio ad absurdum* of this modified theory, and makes it evident, that there is no logical standing ground between the position, apparently accepted by the Editor of the *Church Times*, that even the sacrilegious Baptism of an adult induces regeneration, and that hypothetical and provisional theory of baptismal regeneration in the case of infants, which I have advocated in these pages.

## § 87. Conclusion

It is not too much to say that God makes no unconditional promise either in His sacraments or in His revelation. All His promises are designed to stimulate our faith, and to bring us into direct

contact with His heart of love. His sacraments are indeed promises to those who steadfastly believe the promise that they contain, to others no promise is made. And any attempt to persuade men that they are both made and fulfilled to those, whose faith has never been exercised, must end in inducing spiritual deception, in fostering unreality, in defeating the very object for which the promises have been made, and the sacraments ordained.

Any such teaching must tend to lower the spirituality of the Church by making men content with a religious condition, in which they are destitute of spiritual vitality; and thus must necessarily imperil human souls. From such an unhappy abuse of God's good gifts to man, may He in His mercy ever continue to deliver the Church that we love, and all her children, of whatever party or name.

THE END

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